

















FRANCE TO-DAY





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# FRANCE TO-DAY

BY LAURENCE JERROLD

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JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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# FRANCE TO-DAY

## CHAPTER I

1871-1914

FOR forty-three years France waited, from May 10, 1871, to August 1, 1914.<sup>1</sup> The day came at last. It was not of France's seeking; she did not wince when it came. Few Frenchmen on the eve toasted (as the German sailors did) "an den Tag"; all drank to the day when it was there. That the "Revenge" party, the "Revanchards," were a power in France forty-three years after the war of 1870-1871 was an invention of many German and a few English politicians, the latter afterwards being wiser and sadder. Every one knowing France knows that there are hardly any circumstances conceivable in which France would have declared war on Germany, even to win back Alsace-Lorraine. Germany chose the day; France rose like one man, it was revenge at last. The French democracy, in all honesty, would never have had the heart, for the sake of her revenge, to plunge

<sup>1</sup> The dates of the Treaty of Francfort by which France lost Alsace-Lorraine and of the order of general mobilisation issued in reply to the German order of Kriegsgefahrzustand, different from mobilisation merely in word, of July 31.

Europe into what was bound to be the worst war in modern history. France feared Germany, but that there was more deep, humane scruple than cowardice in her reluctance, no one knowing France doubts. The foe took, without turning a hair, the onus of blood-guiltiness. "En avant!" was the answer:

En avant! Tant pis pour qui tombe.  
La mort n'est rien. Vive la tombe,  
Si le pays en sort vivant.  
En avant!

Si tu veux ma mort, mort à moi,  
Et vive toi, ma France!

It is not great poetry, this of noble-hearted and simple-minded Paul Déroulède, who, chief of all the "Revanchards," died too soon, and knew he would, for he said just before dying, "One never lives to see one's dream come true." But it is poetry of battlefields, bayonet charges, trenches, and storming parties.

The passion of "revenge" for 1870 lay, except in a few, dormant. The few would never have had the strength to send the nation to war. But the fire was there, latent, but a fire. The spark set it ablaze, and France flamed up more than ever she herself knew she would. After all, one was wrong; the "Revanche" still was a cry to call up the French nation with. But one was right too; the spark did it. If France wanted revenge she must thank Germany. France never herself would have given herself the chance. Germany, with a cynicism that was almost ingenuous, gave her the chance.



She took it ; she was instantly changed. She was not changed, she was the real France again. She was no longer self-conscious, petty, frivolous, divided, ironical, cynical ; she was the real France, one nation with one heart, the most one-hearted, deeply united nation in the world, the real France that true observers had always seen beneath the surface. She was one huge battalion of soldiers fighting on fields, in trenches, in forts ; peasants, dukes, millionaires, politicians, priests, bishops, anarchists, all of but one mind. War is horrible. A whole people in war standing up to the invader is beautiful.

Saturday, August 1, 1914 : pictures of Paris and France that one can never forget. “Ça y est,” a piece of paper posted up at the post office : “Ordre de mobilisation générale. Premier jour de la mobilisation, Dimanche 2 août, à dater de minuit samedi.” In Paris, the cabman, the concierge, the boulevardier, the man of fashion, side by side reading it ; at the seaside the fisherman, the Parisian just arrived for the summer, the village postman, the fishwives, side by side, reading it. “Ça y est,” nothing more. Not a wince, not a sigh ; a groan, a murmur even, is unthinkable. No tears from wife or mother—they come later, quietly, at home when no one is looking. Not an instant’s cowardice or revolt or doubt in the whole people.

From that midnight onwards through the fifteen days of mobilisation, the French nation took up arms. Trains bore troops, troops marched, not a man in a thousand flinched, not a mother or wife in a hundred showed her tears. In men’s

rifles were stuck flowers, officers took nosegays as they rode, cannons rolled garlanded and wreathed with laurel. The "Marseillaise" and Méhul's noble "Chant du Départ" sounded down the Paris boulevards. No "A Berlin!" harking ominously back to 1870; some hoots for the German Emperor; one evening of smashing a dozen German shops in Paris; after that a great, quiet determination. The tears came often to one's eyes as one saw in the streets small simple signs of the great upheaval that found every man in the nation suddenly ready: pieces of paper posted on tiny shops' closed shutters, "the cobbler left on the first day of mobilisation"; poor little calico tricolour flags hung out from back kitchen windows; the concierge, the café waiter, the shop clerk, pictures of comfortable peacefulness, all "going" and saying, "I am for the Ardennes and shall see something." "I for Alsace, which will be just as good." "Better it should come now, we have put up with them long enough." The observer from a nation without conscription understood at last what a nation in arms means; after all, these shop clerks, these waiters, these concierges, all these small peaceful people had all been soldiers in their twenties, for two or three years, in peace-time: give them back their rifles and they feel twenty again—twenty again in a holy cause.

\* \* \*

August 4, 1914: an August 4 that will overshadow in French history the Nuit du 4 Août

of the First Revolution, when the nobles renounced their privileges. On this August 4 the nation foreswore everything except the holy cause of the nation's life. I was early in the Chamber of Deputies. I shook hands with the chief usher, who said, “At last we are among ourselves.”<sup>1</sup> In the House, old political foes met and shook hands in silence. Royalists and Unified Socialists, Atheists and Papists grasped each others' hands. I watched from above the bitterest, deadliest enemies of five days before cross the floor of the House towards one another and shake hands, still silently. The President of the Chamber: he speaks first of Jean Jaurès (the whole House stands), murdered on the eve of war, at the end of a day when he had done all he could to stave war off; the whole House, those who worshipped Jaurès and those who called him traitor, is standing; the President speaks of France attacked without the pretence of an excuse, and as he finishes one great shout of “Vive la France!” comes from the whole House, from those who once were Royalists, Bonapartists, Republicans, Anti-clericals, Socialists, and are only Frenchmen now. “All those names are forenames, the surname is Frenchman,” Paul Déroulède had said. “A message from the President of the Republic”; all stand again: it closes with “Keep we high our hearts and live France.” “Live France!” the whole

<sup>1</sup> In the years of peace the foreign press gallery was held like a fort by German newspaper correspondents, and the sole official representative of the foreign press accredited to the Parliamentary authorities (and drawing a salary from them) was the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.

House echoes in a great shout. The Prime Minister, who tells with damning baldness the story of the negotiations through which the enemy step by step forced war. The unanimous vote of supplies. "Vive la France," the House, the public, the press representatives, the Corps Diplomatique are standing and crying with one voice: the historic August 4 meeting of the French Parliament is over. The psychology of other peoples was a closed book to the powers that ruled the German Empire in 1914.

\* \* \*

A month later, day for day, one heard from Paris the German heavy guns. Think of the tragedy of it. Was it all over? Was it to be a worse 1870? Paris did not flinch. Civil authorities, banks, financiers, the Bank of France with its gold, citizens unfortunately prominent enough to be upon the prepared German list of hostages, left in the middle of the night, and the military authorities were glad to be rid of them. Paris herself never had nerves for a moment. Tauben flew over Paris, dropping bombs that killed or maimed women and children. Paris never even lost her good-humour or her temper. I was writing in rooms on the boulevards at five o'clock one afternoon when one explosion nearly smashed one of my windows, and another a minute later nearly smashed another. We all ran downstairs to the boulevards and stood in the middle of the street craning our necks to look at the Taube. That was the first five-o'clock Taube visit, which afterwards became a



habit. One said: "Time for the Taube, let us go down towards the Opera; we shall just see it." Others went and sat on the Place de la Concorde of an afternoon, where there is more sky space for watching aeroplanes. One more proof of the German failure in psychology, by the side of so many successes in other less subtle sciences. The Tauben "terrorising" Paris only kept Paris interested. For weeks they did not even excite Paris enough to induce the taking of any means for stopping them. After a time, Paris suddenly said, "We have had enough of these Tauben. They bore us. Let them be stopped." An aeroplane scout service was started, and no Taube was seen over Paris again. Why was not the aeroplane scout service started before? Paris was too lazy, and the military authorities of Paris "had other and more important matters to deal with." So much for "terrorising" Paris.

\* \* \*

The battle of the Marne, after Mons and Charleroi: a supreme and great retrieval.

General Joffre, Commander-in-Chief, to his troops on September 6, said:

"Now that a battle begins upon which the fate of the country depends, all must remember this: the time is gone for looking behind; every endeavour must be aimed at attacking and throwing back the enemy; troops unable to continue advancing will at all costs keep the ground won and must die rather than yield. In this juncture there can be no mercy for any shortcoming."

Later historians may know the whole truth about the battles of Mons and Charleroi of August 1914. They may determine purposes and accidents, plan and chance, luck and ill luck, achievements and blunders. To us now only some facts are known. France had massed her forces along her eastern, not her north-eastern, frontier. Great Britain had not yet come in. France avoided even the suspicion of an intention to invade Belgium; 1870 was remembered, when the Power suspected of threatening Belgium was France. In 1914 German forces hacked their way through Belgium.

British forces were landed in Northern France. Even the Belgian sacrifices at Liège and Namur did not give the Allies time to concentrate efficiently on the Franco-Belgian frontier. The German forces, after hacking through, swept round in a great circle down the left bank of the Meuse. Why did they not remain on the right bank and march down by Givet through the Trouée de Stenay? Some think that was the initial German blunder, others that the sweep round through the broader and more open road was the better move. It took time, but it found the way clear—only too clear.

Blunder for blunder, the Allies blundered first, and theirs might have cost them Paris and France. If Belgium had let the invader through, Paris must have fallen. The fortnight's delay, bought by the life-blood of the little country that might have held aloof, still found the Allies unready at the crucial point. France had not, for obvious political reasons, concentrated before

at the Belgian frontier. But now Great Britain had come in and landed her forces. Why was there no re-concentration there where the German flood poured in? Fifty years hence it will be known. The German flood poured in, and met on the right the British troops, still small, on the left French territorials, a fortnight before clerks in counting-houses, sellers in shops, little tradespeople at their trades. The territorials, before the flower of the German Army, before the Prussian Guards, broke. Who will blame them? The British troops, trained and seasoned, held as long as one man against five can hold. That was Charleroi and Mons and Le Cateau. Why was not the best French strength opposed to the best German? Why were the British forces left unsupported? Anyhow, General von Kluck's army came on, marching irresistibly at thirty and thirty-five miles a day. Was it all up with Paris and France?

It seemed so on September 4. On September 13 the Commander-in-Chief General Joffre announced to the Minister of War: "Our victory is complete. Our armies, after the fights of September 5 to 12, are in pursuit of the enemy. We have gained 100 kilometres in six days' battle." The most astonishing counterblow in the modern, perhaps in the whole history of wars, had been dealt. The German forces, rushing on irresistibly, were at Gonesse, eight miles from Paris. They seemed, and thought themselves, irresistible. The Allies had retired—had literally run—before them. Their right (General von Kluck) turned eastwards on September 5,

the better to encompass Paris. On the 6th General Joffre ordered the Allied armies' attack. Suddenly the German right discovered an army (General Maunoury) it had never suspected. General von Kluck turned round, with admirable skill, to meet it. He manœuvred magnificently and retreated sixty miles to good positions. The Kronprinz on the German left was in difficulties and retired less magnificently. General Joffre had won the battle of the Marne.

If General von Kluck had guessed the existence of General Maunoury's army on his right he might have reached Paris. Had he not manœuvred as skilfully as he did when he found out his blunder, the German retreat from the Marne might have been the German rout from France. I do not doubt that General Joffre admires German manœuvring in the surprise of the Marne. I am sure that German commanders equally admire General Joffre's great retrieval. Think of it. A retreat from Charleroi to Paris; the enemy persuaded he has nothing of any count against him; a rush at thirty-five miles a day without opposition, through some of the richest counties of France; a triumphant progress; Paris is his. Suddenly a new army on his right he had never dreamt of; fighting, after the conqueror's riotous advance with wine and women, when it was not sottishness and rape; retreat, defeat, the great invasion turned into a general strategic move to the rear; a rout prevented only by discipline and entrenchment. The raid on Paris to September 4, 1914, and the saving of Paris from September 6 to Sep-



tember 12, 1914, will be spoken of by many generations.

“We have been able to show the world that an organised democracy can bring strong action to the service of freedom and equality, the ideals that make it great. We have been able to show the world that, in the words of our Commander-in-Chief, who is a great soldier and a noble citizen, the Republic may be proud of the army she made,” said the Prime Minister in Parliament on December 22, 1914. The Third French Republic has shown that she has not weakened France. She blundered, she was blind, she buried her head in her own little domestic quarrels, while the Empire next door was putting its last finishing touch to its monster war machine. She has proved that, with all her foibles and faults and backslidings, she well preserved still the real France. Do not put it that at the instant of danger the real France found herself in spite, not because, of the Republic. If Republican Government had been capable of weakening France, it would have had time to do it in forty-three years. Nineteen years of Empire produced a France that was crushed in a month. The real France of 1870-1 found herself only after the fall of the Empire, when Gambetta rallied the country and France made such a stand as no country so defeated made before. In the midst of war the France of the Second Empire fought against herself. From August 4, 1914, the France of the Third Republic stood fast, with one front to the foe.

The Republic made many mistakes. I know



many, now old Republicans, whom the war uprooted from the doctrines of a lifetime: good-will among men, war against war, the United States of Europe, were blown away like bubbles. The Republic had never been quite unready, but had never been more than half ready, for war: fortifications, heavy guns, ammunition, were only more or less prepared, the return to the three years' military service, bringing up the first French fighting line within measurable distance of the German, was passed just a year before the war. Less than a week before Germany declared war on France<sup>1</sup> there was no President of the Republic, no Prime Minister, no Foreign Secretary in France. All Paris, all France, and all the world, in so far as it thought of French affairs, was wrapt in the trial of Madame Caillaux for having shot dead the editor of the *Figaro*, and was wondering whether her husband would or would not prove strong enough (he did) to procure her acquittal, and he always acknowledged himself to be the champion of Franco-German friendship for business reasons. A pleasant, peaceful gentleman was *locum tenens* at the Quai d'Orsay. M. Viviani himself (he told me so in July 1914) was still shy of handling the foreign policy of France, and he was away in Russia. The amiable *locum tenens* received the visit of Baron von Schoen and said, of course his Excellency comes to ask for a seat

<sup>1</sup> The President of the Republic, with the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, M. Viviani, returned from their visit to the Emperor of Russia, planned long before, on Wednesday, July 29. Baron von Schoen intimated Germany's Declaration of War on France on Monday, August 3.

for the Caillaux trial. The Baron came to say that his Imperial master had decided to uphold Austria to the utmost. Imagine the state of mind of the amiable *locum tenens*, perfectly ignorant of the affairs of Europe and horribly nervous about the foreign policy of France.

On Friday, July 31, at 4 p.m. I called at the Austro-Hungarian Embassy in Paris, where I had friends. Count S. told me: "I am confident that an understanding will be come to between us and Russia." At 4.30 the news reached Paris that Germany had declared the *Kriegsgefahrzustand*. It is now clear that Germany was trying to lull Russia with the suggestion of continued negotiations between her and Austria-Hungary, and was indeed communicating the suggestion to Austria-Hungary herself, at the very instant that Germany was declaring the *Kriegsgefahrzustand*.<sup>1</sup> That evening a widely known British pacifist talked to me earnestly over the telephone imploring me to announce that (as he was informed, and he knew His Majesty personally) the German Emperor was opposed to war and had threatened the German war party that he would abdicate if the latter persisted in its aims.

Three days later Germany declared war on France, on the pretext, which Baron von Schoen who made the declaration at the Quai d'Orsay scarcely himself feigned to believe, that French aviators had flown over Nuremberg. In the interval Germany had invaded French territory,

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, August 1914. Compare Nos. 110, 112, 113.

invaded Luxembourg, and sent her ultimatum to Belgium.

That France or England prepared war on Germany is a grim, a German joke. On the Sunday afternoon, August 2, 1914, the French Foreign Office wondered one thing: would the violation of the neutrality of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg by Germany, then just accomplished, be sufficient to bring Great Britain in? Friends at the Quai d'Orsay and I weighed the words of the treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Luxembourg, and we doubted. That same day His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador in Paris was gaily telling all whom he met that Great Britain would remain neutral. Humble subjects of His Majesty like myself spent much less gay hours and sleepless nights. On that Sunday night the editor of *Le Matin* kept me a half hour on the telephone with despairing appeals: he had the worst news from London; Great Britain was standing out and letting Germany make the war she wanted; I must do all I could, I must move heaven and earth. I had done what I could. The next day I met that editor at the Quai d'Orsay and he fell into my arms: at seven the evening before, Germany had sent her ultimatum to Belgium; England was by France's side.

And England made war on poor Germany! What grim jokes German jokes are! The French Republic, taken unawares, as no State ever was, met the assault as only a real nation can. "German diplomacy has ceased to exist," said friends of mine at the Quai d'Orsay, when Germany

sent the ultimatum to Belgium. A few hours later, my friends, ministers plenipotentiary, secretaries of embassy, were lieutenants, sergeants, privates, in the French army. A few days later they were at the front, and some are buried there. The nation took up the challenge as only a real nation can. The priest waived his "Love one another" and fought, and was killed. The anarchist waived his "Love one another" and shot as many Boches as he could, and was killed. The anti-militarist was the hardest fighter, the royalist Camelot du Roy, propagandist in peace time of the Duc d'Orléans against the Republic and a thorn in the side of Paris politicians, said, "At last we can fight without being run in"; the syndicalist trooper, after risking his life to save his lieutenant, whistled the chorus of "L'Internationale," the burthen of which is, "And we keep our bullets to shoot our Generals with." German organisation is remarkable, German militarism is wonderful, German psychology is weak. Against German aggression France stood like one man. The Third Republic had not lessened, had perhaps broadened, the French people's will. Who thought France would be divided against who attacked France, was blind. Who thought France was no longer one France was blind.

Even Germans never, I believe, thought exactly that France had forgotten how to fight, but they knew she was only half ready and they ready to the last gaiter button, and the last incendiary cartridge for setting houses on fire; they madly imagined she was permanently



unnerved, and had lost her national constancy ; they least of all dreamt that, of old a fighter, she would put up as good a fight as of old in a new way and a way new to her. A furiously dashing French soldier all the world knew ; one capable of grimly holding on for days, then weeks, then months, no one had known, and he probably himself did not know. The victory of the Marne, after the retreat from Charleroi, was the last thing the enemy expected the French Army capable of. General Joffre was the last sort of Commander-in-Chief Germany expected to find in the field : dashing Murats and Marceaus, if you will, with the ghost of a chance of a new Napoleon ; never a stolid, stout, quiet old gentleman who slept soundly nine hours a night, never turned a hair in retreat, never knew nerves, never fussed, never doubted, stuck fast where he wanted, plodded whither he meant to plod ; a bulldog where a snappy, quicksilver, short-breathed fox-terrier was expected,—and it was the German who turned out to be the fox-terrier, biting and dashing hither and thither with astonishing liveliness while the bulldog held on with astonishing endurance. French stamina surprised Germany.



## CHAPTER II

### FRANCE

FRANCE is one country and the French are one nation more than any other country or nation in Europe. Look first at the map. The French soil was the abuttal of the peoples' rush westwards. Successive wander instincts found rest west of the Rhine and of the Alps. France was the most convenient settling place of the hordes of young peoples pushed from the east. The British Isles were cut off, as, other things equal, the sea is the most difficult bar. The Spanish peninsula was too far, round the corner as it were, and round the corner from the opposite side Africa protruded. Many peoples were naturally led to pitch their tents finally in France, across the Rhine, down the Rhône, over the sea to Provence. France drew to herself more different peoples than any other country in Europe. Her place on the map was like that of no other country in Europe. She commanded Western Europe; she held the Channel against England; she had a great Atlantic seaboard, she spread out on the Mediterranean; she touched North-eastern Europe closely by the Rhine and the Rhone; she touched South-eastern Europe through the passes of the Alps;

she held the only land routes east and west of the Pyrenees to Spain. Geographical France is the most favoured country in Europe. To-day, though she has grossly neglected her chances on the sea, France still lives by her place on the map. She ought to be the great maritime Power, for trade and for war, of Europe: she still is, as she was in the primitive history of the westwards rush of peoples, a privileged country that links north with south, that looks westwards oceanwards, that belongs eastwards to the continent. She is a sea power on one side, a land power on the other, a northern power here, a southern power there; she is, roughly, a Teutonic and a Latin country, and she puts out her Celtic foreland into the Atlantic.

Diverse by her position, France was also destined clearly by her position to harbour a quickly and closely united people. There is no land in Europe at once as varied and as compact. The British Isles, obviously less diverse, being in touch with only one corner of Europe, were also severed deeply in their anatomy and have been deeply severed in history by the St. George's Channel. Cut off from the north, as the British Isles from the south, the Spanish peninsula was at the same time too perilously near Africa to enjoy the long safety of abode without which a people has not the peace of mind it needs to fashion its house into one home, and though Spain and Portugal live together in one house geographically they are two divided national homes as much as ever.

The Pyrenees, the Alps, the Rhine, and her

three seaboards made France naturally one land. The constant French instinct to stretch French power to the Rhine is thus, at all events, good geography. The steady and complete unifying of the peoples inhabiting France was a necessary consequence in history of the lie of French land. The constant policy of centralisation which the French monarchy pursued for centuries and at last achieved, which the wildest Revolutionists of the Terror carried on without an instant's doubt of its necessity, and which the Emperor, come from Corsica to understand certain French national instincts better than any French ruler before, brought to an iron perfection, is finally explained by France's position on the map.

The French are organically one nation, as France is structurally one country. No people in Europe is more one people. It is not a homogeneous people, it is a greatly varied people, but it is a people organised by time, by chance, by instinct, and by conscious purpose to be one people. All the governing powers of the country have for centuries worked towards uniting the nation. The chance that began the making of one French people was the lie of the land upon which wanderers of different races at last settled. The unifying and centralising instinct has not been only that of rulers; the governed also, in spite of long and stubborn holding out of kingdom and province against absorption by the Capetian Crown, gradually were drawn out of the parochial to a broader patriotism. But the unifying of France has certainly also been

reasoned, instinct became conscious intuition, and the French nation of deliberate purpose organised itself. Though made of elements more varied than made most of the European nations, it is the nation in Europe that is most one nation. France had to throw into the melting-pot (the common, if uncertain, terminology of races being accepted) as many Celts as Great Britain, perhaps nearly as many Teutons as what is Germany to-day, perhaps nearly as many Latins as what is Italy to-day. Be problems of true racial descent what they may, Gauls, Norsemen, Franks, Latins, Phœnicians, and Basques made up the French people, and for over two centuries it has been, and to-day it is, one indissoluble people, and no plausible hypothesis of world change foresees for centuries its dissolution. This perhaps, first of all, should be considered about France and the French.

The French have a national character more than any other people in Europe. The political unity of France is easily seen to be at least as complete as that of any other country. What is more interesting is to look deeper and to find the unity of French national character. Only shallow observers perceive such unity to be greater in the English people; the strange and lasting divorce between the deed and the thought, the facts and the dreams of England, between her prose and her poetry, has escaped them. Between the German fist and German fancy, between the heavy forcefulness and the poetic feeling that Germany has shown to the world, is another and rather similar, but, happily



for the English, more violent contrast. The fist may have crushed the fancy, but one cannot finally forget the latter, though those who feel the fist may be pardoned for forgetting the fancy, and one will not cease wondering probably as long as one lives, that a people, or an assemblage of peoples, which at one time sang some of the greatest and most delicate poetry the world knows, should perfect a system of methodical brutality such as the world never knew before, that "Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh, . . ." <sup>1</sup> is in the same tongue as "Krieg ist Krieg," with which three words old men, women and children were shot. If the poetry of Germany be German, and one supposes it must be, there is no German national character, but a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde association, and in the history of to-day the devil has taken the hindmost.

No sharp divorce divides, no great confusion disturbs, the French national character. Go from Lille to Marseilles, from the French Academy to the factory, from the Champs Elysées and millionaire shopkeepers (barring foreign settlers) to Belleville and its syndicalists. It is the same country, with the same spirit, the same language, almost the same manners. The French speech first proves to an outsider the unity of the French people.

Class distinctions in French speech are perceptible to a foreigner only if he has lived years of French life. The new-comer may quite well take a shopgirl for a duchess, judging by her

<sup>1</sup> But there is no Goethe now.

speech. There is less difference between the accents of an academician and a navvy in France than there is between those of a professional man and a tradesman in many other countries. Provincial accents, dialects, and real languages also, like Breton, Provençal, Basque, remain. But finally, the Marseillais who sounds all his syllables as in Italian, and the Picard with the broad, flat Flemish intonation, have accepted the same unified French tongue. The French State, with the general consent of the French nation, does not foster or even tolerate, but steadily aims at obliterating independent languages: Mistral, who re-made Provençal, had to teach the Provençaux how to read him; not a word of Basque is allowed to be taught in the schools of the Basque country, and the Basques keep up their ancient and mysterious tongue only by teaching it themselves to their children; Breton in Brittany is not officially recognised as a language. With the single exception in the world probably of the linguistic marvel of Russia, where the illiterate peasant speaks the best Russian, the French are most the nation of one language. It was not the language of all the French, it was imposed upon them by the masterful Île de France, the nucleus round which all modern France was built, and they accepted it and accept its canons, its laws, its style. There are no two opinions on any rule of French grammar, and there are many provincial French academies but only one French Academy, which many writers pretend to laugh at but all finally bow to.



From Lille to Marseilles, from Brest to Bordeaux, there is a unity of manners, a unity in the way of living and looking at life, completer than in other nations. He who first spoke of "the pleasant land of France" saw that. He saw almost everywhere, in rich Touraine, in frugal Auvergne, that genial acceptance of things as they are. A bright face to all weathers, a kindly face to the foreigner, a certain inbred polish and pleasant, easy way with men and things. On the outside, an agreeable demeanour towards whosoever met or whatever happens; nothing harsh or stiff in behaviour or philosophy. One people long versed in the art of *savoir vivre*, knowing how to live and let live, old in culture, old especially in social culture, in the art of rounding off corners that men may rub with one another more comfortably. Beneath the surface a corresponding philosophy: a determination not to quarrel with life, but make the best of it, to show a cheerful face to fate as to the things of every-day; but no jocose, devil-may-care jauntiness that snaps its fingers, nothing whatever of a sort of Bohemianism that is sometimes supposed to be French; on the contrary, an earnest, almost a deadly earnest, intention to make the best of things, a set purpose to get as much out of life as can be got, a persistent realism, perhaps with subconscious roots in an instinct to clutch at what is for fear what might be would be worse, and in a belief that life must be made the best of because there is nothing else.

The pleasant land of France hides a deep,

ruthless realism beneath its amenities, and its philosophy, that tries to make life as agreeable as may be on the surface, is grave, sometimes bitter, beneath. The silent peasant of the north, the chattering southerner in his second-rate vineyards, the solemn, priest-like vintner of the great Médoc, the bullet-headed Auvergnat; the little bourgeois, the big bourgeois, the striving little shopkeeper, the man of big undertakings,—they are all realists, they all have a great faith in life, perhaps a rather dry, hard, too shrewd faith, but because of it they anyhow try to make life more not less worth living. Perhaps the Bretons who must dream, and the Basques whose mysterious race has kept to itself, will have to be left out (though the Bretons are being more and more assimilated to France),<sup>1</sup> but for the rest all over France every Frenchman thinks the particular polished, intelligent, dry, refined, pleasant, stern French realism the only natural way of looking at things.

In two words there is a “French spirit.” It has no equivalent as real in other peoples. It is not only a real thing, but it is really conceived by the French people. Others not only have not found themselves as completely, but have not looked for themselves as clear-sightedly. “L’esprit français” is a philosophic entity in France. In the arts and in philosophy it has been conscious and deliberate; in the ways of

<sup>1</sup> The “blues” of Brittany are the Republicans, gradually gaining ground over the “whites,” the old Royalists, and Brest, moreover, is a Socialist centre. But Breton Republicans and Socialists are Bretons still.

life it is instinctive and no less strong. French thought always assumes the French spirit to be one of the intellectual facts of the world, and not seldom considers it the world's intellectual standard. French life not only acts all round half consciously up to the French standard, but when it turns round and reflects upon itself, acknowledges that it so acts, and that there is a French spirit guiding it. I doubt whether, since the Athenian or the Roman, any such complete national spirit has existed. German imperial thinking is a thing of yesterday, and there is no correspondence between it and the German thought that has counted in the world. It is difficult to find a common German spirit among the real German thinkers, seers, and singers that the world has listened to, and impossible to find among them a common character that can be called that of the modern German Empire.<sup>1</sup> Russian thought expressed in art has been intensely national in spirit, but political and diplomatic Russia is entirely divorced from the rest of Russia, and there are many Russias, of which one knows some and guesses at others: the Russia of literature, the Russia of European and Asiatic politics, the Russia of the soil which may be the same as the first; but there is no one Russia that the rest of the world knows. The modern Italian spirit is a thing of an even more recent yesterday, in spite of dates, than

<sup>1</sup> Since that became mere militarism, German guns, not German thought, were the only German thing the world knew, and Germany too. A common character of militarism is not a common character of any thinkers, but a common abdication.

the German Imperial spirit, and is still a far less real spirit than that of the Italian Renaissance. Italy found herself better, in the things that really matter for the world, when a dozen alien armies overran her and she was a wild fox at bay fighting, than since the modern day of her unity.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FRENCH SPIRIT

THE French spirit, considered as a national and political spirit, is a passion for national unity. In history the fact stands out that the Île de France eventually absorbed Burgundy and Languedoc, Normandy and Provence. All became French, and are French to-day. Nice, joined centuries later, is French to-day. Brittany is almost French to-day. Metz, Strasbourg, Mulhouse, become politically German in 1871, were French still, forty-three years after : speak German there and you were a stranger and "bad form" ; speak French, in shop or café, and you were welcome and a person "who knows how to live." Yet, what is French ? What made the French ? What are the French by descent that they should overbearingly be French ? The historical reply only is the truism that several races, several civilisations, several climes, joined to form among them a French national and political spirit.

The crystallisation of countries round the Île de France has been a remarkable fact in history. It was not only a process of geographical chemistry. It was psychological : the Île de France became the will and the mind, and by further



sighted power took the command. Hence the French spirit, which at the beginning was implied in the map of France. Half-baked France was torn by civil wars, by the Fronde, by the wars of religion. They did not matter for the one France. She lost by casting out some of the Huguenots; no matter, she was becoming the one France. A century or two later, and the Huguenots remaining at Montpellier—Huguenots as ever there were—were, if not French first and Huguenots after, at least doubtful at the pinch which they were first. To-day, in the south the Huguenot is Huguenot still, and he and the Roman Catholic would knife each other at times of excitement, but each would call the other a bad Frenchman for an insult. The first French Revolution tore up France: from the Girondins to the Terror it always obeyed the French political spirit. Robespierre worshipping the Goddess of Reason, and Fouquier Tinville condemning prisoners without a hearing in the name of the higher cause of the Fatherland, were only exaggerations of the French character: they were not at all foreign to the French political and national spirit. Though the Revolution had the Chouans to fight, it was still representatively French; it represented France much more than is often understood. It was the French spirit at a paroxysm, French thought exasperated, French reason reduced to the absurd. Napoleon came: the French passion for unity was satisfied at last. He astoundingly understood France—not all France, but a big part of it, and at least a big part of the French

political spirit. It is one of the amazing facts of history that he was identified with France. He led armies made up of a dozen nations, and it was France that won. He fell, and it was France that fell. He understood the French national passion for unity, and with the counsellors chosen and imperiously guided by him, planned the organisation of France that lasts to this day.

The French political spirit thus has persisted through extraordinary vicissitudes. The Terror strengthened it, a Corsican adventurer, by evidently providential chance, kept it up. The gentle Revolution of 1848, the placid Second Empire, the short and sharp Commune, the Third Republic, confirmed it.

To-day French political unity is the pattern for social organisms aiming at unity. The purpose and causes of French political centralisation are seldom well understood. It is not by chance that the French social fabric has been steadily and rigorously centralised, nor has extreme centralisation been merely the device of rulers for ruling more easily and more strongly, were the rulers the Convention of the First Revolution, Napoleon I, Napoleon III, or the political caucuses of the Third Republic. The system indeed came in handy for every ruling power, and each one in France has in turn used and strengthened it. The French statesman out of power talks of decentralisation, giving freer play to the limbs and relieving the head. In power he does as his predecessors did, and M. Clemenceau in office was the most iron-

handed of Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries, wielding with a stringent arm all the array of weapons which the elaborate machinery of the Ministry of the Interior placed at his command throughout French territory and upon which he had called down the indignation of all honest lovers of freedom during the long years he was wrecking Cabinets, not captaining one. But French centralisation is neither an accident nor the product of domineering ambitions. It is mainly a natural growth, and it is in the main accepted as natural by the French people.

The French political mind has a passion for logic, regularity, symmetry, and coherence in the arrangement of the social fabric. It takes eagerly to the tale of the Belly and the Members, to the neat theory that a people is an organic body like the human body, and that it can live well only by carrying out the analogy. An efficient action must be directed from the head; in the body politic the men at the head see furthest, and if a thing is to be done well it must be done from the top, from the beginning, and all round. Therefore, it would be absurd to pay much attention to lower standpoints, narrower views, local interests. The man with the broadest view knows best; he knows what is good for the smaller horizons better than they know themselves. The portion of fallacy contained in the tale of the Belly and the Members is little considered by the French political mind. The latter tends to build up a loose analogy into a strict system, and to waive objections and questions. Will it be all gain for all the parts

of a people that the people be dealt with rigorously as one single body politic, in which all the organs are wholly interdependent and all are subordinate to the controlling brain, if any such ideal of organisation be realisable? Modern physiology does not look upon the human body as a strictly hierarchical system of forces, and finds much relative independence in many of these. In the body politic may there not also be some virtue in some looseness of organisation and even in some strain of anarchy, in the real sense of the word? The French political mind will almost never think so, but will think it only rational, natural, and right to proceed from theory to fact, from general plan to particulars. Hence, most of the elaborate machinery of the French social fabric: the Home Office, controlling or overseeing by direct telephone wires from the Place Beauvau in Paris every working of the country's administration, through Prefects and Subprefects, who, ever present deputies of the Central Authority, are ever watching Councils General and Municipal Councils, ever ready to report an "illegal political resolution" of the former, to recommend the dismissal by the minister of a mayor from the office to which he has been elected by his fellow villagers; the Public Roads and Bridges Government Department superintending with a proportionate measure of authority the carefully classified roads of France, classified by a rule that suffers not one exception, from rural and "vicinal" to national roads, with "departmental" roads and roads "of broad communica-



tion" in between; the Ministry of Public Instruction, a former chief of which is still remembered as having said proudly, taking out his watch, "At this moment every boy in every Government school of France has been put to his Latin prose."

I have elsewhere<sup>1</sup> tried to describe the sharp contrast between English and French methods of national organisation, between the English and the French political spirit. I am not concerned here with the drawbacks or advantages of either method. The point to bear in mind is the great strength, persistence, and vitality of the French political spirit. It is perfectly honest to itself and in its belief, call it principle or bias as you will. Almost all French political thinkers, for instance, sincerely deplore, for America's sake, the loose organisation of the United States, considered as one body politic, urge centralisation, and hold that the United States' destiny in the world must compel them eventually towards a more closely knit fabric, towards an hierarchical, disciplined, co-ordinate and single organism. It is perfectly honest in its dealings with French colonies, to which it allows not a vestige of self-government, but in many cases representation in the parliament of the metropolis, a measure Great Britain has never thought of; in the same way at home it has been perfectly honest in its persistent increase of centralisation through the vicissitudes of half a dozen different and conflicting forms of Government during the modern history of France.

<sup>1</sup> *The French and the English* (London, 1913).



The French political spirit is a passion for unity.

To-day France is as determined as ever to be one nation, and more than ever is one nation. The French political spirit is as vigorous as ever. There is no sign of the disintegration of the French nation. Neither the falling birth-rate nor the correspondingly enormous alien immigration seem to make the French less French.

The French spirit has a strange and perhaps unique absorbent power. The French mind has probably influenced the world more deeply than any other national mind, though French material power has spread little. English influence has been spread by English facts more than by English ideas; France has, with astonishingly little deed, astonishingly affected the world by her thought. The other way round, she accepts much foreign vitality, but it does not change her ways of thinking. She absorbs foreigners more completely than any other nation. The United States do not make a Pole an American as quickly as the French make a Frenchman of him. Patriotic French tub-thumpers cry against alien immigration; but aliens receive the French imprint very soon and extraordinarily deeply: the Polish Jew in Whitechapel may remain an alien all his life, and his children remain alien after him. Even Jews become almost essentially French, and an American Jew is less American than a French Jew is French. The tub-thumper's bugbears of Semitic and alien invasion are no more real one than the other in France. The real French patriot recognises

the amazing French power of putting the French stamp once for all upon an alien mind. I have met a Greek lemon merchant who had hardly enough English to explain that he was one, and who told us all on board emphatically that he was a citizen of the United States. But I have met Russians, Italians, Danes, even English people, in Paris who were more French than the French. The French mind had bewitched them and changed them. Who ever heard of a Frenchman in London whom the English mind had bewitched? French Canadians are more French than the French of to-day—French of the days of Louis Quinze. The falling birth-rate in France is thus a less important question than hypnotised statisticians imagine. So long as the French keep the power to stamp the foreigner who settles in their midst in their own image, the French may bear fewer children, but they will adopt and shape those of others to the French fashion, and they will remain French as before. The French national spirit is perhaps the most overweening spirit in the world.

Alsatia, German in great part by race and almost wholly by language, remained doggedly French in spirit, notwithstanding all that German police domination could do, because Alsatia had been French. The French imprint upon Alsatia had been originally a foreign one: once stamped it was never forgotten, and what Germans could with historical logic claim to be a return to German rule never effaced it. The paradox was seen of the people of Mühlhausen,

which is a German name that means something, persisting in calling themselves the people of Mulhouse, which in French is a couple of meaningless syllables. The paradox went further: Alsatians (when German policemen were out of hearing) prayed in German to be French again, and in German called themselves French at heart, not knowing and never having known any other tongue but German and the Alsatian dialect. All because they had once been French. There is probably no more astonishing example of the moral and intellectual imprint of a people which all the material might of a materially mighty other people never succeeded in effacing. That the German fist never drove the French spirit out of Alsace is the most galling confession of weakness for the German fist and the most flattering tribute to the French spirit.

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The social and economic character of the French people is of a piece with its political and national spirit, as was to be expected in a logical people. The instinct of racial preservation is probably stronger among the French than in any other nation. They are jealous of their national character, and keep it more faithfully than the Jews or the Chinese: they were called the Chinese of Europe by Bjornstiern-Bjornsen. The French Canadians are a more remarkable example of the persistence of national characteristics, customs, language, ways of living and ways of thinking than any Jewish settlement among the middle and wealthy classes of France,

Germany, Italy, or the Anglo-Saxon nations. The Jew remains a Jew through the centuries. Yet in spite of all that anti-Semites say, what in the modern history of the Jews most strikes the unbiassed observer is not how little, but relatively how much they have been assimilated by the peoples among whom they have settled and have assimilated their characteristics. About an English, a German, a French Rothschild what surprises any student but an anti-Semite is not how Jewish he has remained, but, all things considered, how English, German, especially how French he has become. The Jew is the obvious type of persistent national character. Yet even the Jew, at least the successful Jew, keeps his national character less in any country than the Frenchman settled anywhere outside his own country. The Jew in Anglo-Saxondom remains more or less of a Jew; but he is less Jewish than the French-Canadian is French, and more of an Anglo-Saxon than the French-Canadian is Anglo-Saxon.

The deep French instinct of self-preservation shows itself in its social and economic arrangements. It is clear that small ownership of land, capital, and all forms of property must make for conservatism much more than latifundia trusts and large capitalism. It is not only because France to-day has no surplus population that there are no French emigrants. The peasant who owns his field and his farm, who came into them as his equal share of his father's and mother's goods, to whom his wife brought probably another field and another farm from



her parents, and who will leave, if he can manage it, an improved heritage to his two or three children, is the last man in Europe to dream of emigrating. The French town artisan, though a wage-earner, is of the stuff of which small capitalists are made. He may have yet no capital himself, or may have lost the little he had; he will be a very rare French labourer if he has not a father or an uncle or a cousin, or a cousin of his wife, with a small capital, a small stake in the nation's wealth and probably in the people's soil. He almost certainly has "expectations"—a thousand francs or so—and almost certainly means himself not to reach old age without having become a capitalist.

Almost every Frenchman, including the Socialist navvy, feels that the natural and right thing is for him to own a mite of the nation's saved wealth, and saves that he may own that mite. He feels that he belongs really to France, as a portion of France belongs to him. The instinctive judgment that he who owns nothing, even though living well on wages from day to day, is a straw on the waves, a floating thing without a tie to any solid earth, is almost universal among the humblest French people, badly-paid clerks, day-labourers, unskilled workmen, servant girls. The occasional flares and explosions of French labour unrest are vivid and violent; they are always discounted, in the observer's eye, by the fact that the Socialist has some hundreds invested in *rentes*, and the Anarchist a freehold cottage in his native village. The French bourgeoisie is, of course, the type of a



class in which the instinct of social preservation is strongest. It has changed in modern times, it spends its money more, it amuses itself more ; but its habits of business, its ways of living, its marriages, its domestic economy remain the example still of a human group intently bent on self-preservation.

I come to the French intellectual spirit, to the spirit of the French people in thought for thought's sake : a higher and deeper, even a startling subject when approached. I think that there is a specifically French mind more than there is any other specifically national mind. The French intellectual spirit is a distinctive and characteristic one in speculation, in art, even in science, and especially in the science of living.

That in pure thought the French have almost always been builders will surprise the superficial observer who has always called them destroyers. Voltaire, Diderot, the *Encyclopédistes* sapped religion ; but they might not, if pushed to it, have gone out of their way to stop an enemy of reason being burnt at the stake. There are almost no French mystics ; there have been, and there are to-day, almost none. The French mind builds solidly on reason. There has been no broad current of mysticism in French thought since the Middle Ages. There was a mystic fashion in a small set of thinkers in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century ; it passed, and by what was really not an unexpected process the revival of dogmatic and orthodox Roman Catholicism among the younger intellectual generation at the beginning

of the twentieth century coincided with the passing of the mystic fashion. French philosophic thought has seldom trusted to revelation in the search for truth, and seldom preferred the direct perception of the Absolute, which is the principle of mysticism. Existence was a continuous miracle for Malebranche, but he reasoned very reasonably and humanly about it. In philosophy a French Novalis, in philosophy or in poetry a French William Blake, are hardly thinkable. Almost all French philosophy has posited human reason—by which unconsciously it meant just human life—first, before beginning speculation.

French philosophy has built, not destroyed; not, if you will, built high into the air like the skylark drunk with its own song at the zenith, but like the beaver, solidly, serviceably, and close to the ground. All representative French philosophy has been human first of all: it will be easily seen to have been not the accelerator on the engine, but the brake on the wheel. It is the mystics who upheave human thought, not the human thinkers with feet of clay. On this earth also, French philosophy has set, not upset balance. Bacon, Hume, Locke, Darwin, were greater revolutionists really than the Girondins and Jacobins of the First French Revolution. What was the sapping of the Christian religion compared with the invention of induction, the destruction of innate ideas, the discovery of evolution? A squib to a bombshell.

French deeds have been much more revolu-

tionary than French thought. French philosophy has never forsaken the methods of deduction or belief in innate ideas, still a favourite faith at the Sorbonne to-day. It invaluablely keeps the balance, and the proper trust in human reason. Were all other philosophies finally to reduce our judgments to the product of physical feelings complicated through evolution—that roughly has been the lesson of English philosophy—it would still (in spite of Condillac, who counts little) hold up the relative absolute of human reason for our guidance and our admiration. No mysticism has led it to hold that there is any other proper standard for man's thought than man's mind; no relativist, no associationist, no evolutionist theory has led it to hold that, as far as man is concerned, man's reason is not absolute. A very safe faith for man. A safe faith for man is the very aim of French thought. Descartes was perhaps the most representative French mind in philosophy. To-day, and probably always, almost every Frenchman is a Cartésien at heart. Pascal, the mystic? His famous and tragic vision, the abyss often open before him, was mystical. But his Christianity is the type of rigid and logical faiths. His very literary style is beautifully clear reason. A mystic? He was, but he kept his mysticism down with an iron hand. That was typical of the French intellectual spirit: we are human, and it is wrong and foolish to take aught but human reason for our guide.

In the literary art the French mind has been particularly itself. In the other arts it has well given its share of beauty and pleasure to the world, but it has not been essentially and exclusively French. Great French painters, sculptors, musicians, architects, decorators have not been as peculiarly French as the literary artists of France. In these the French spirit is strongest and most self-willed. Save for the heritage of Greek and Roman art common to all modern peoples, and passing influences from Italy and Spain, the French literary art is self-made. It has not dreamt of going outside the French mind. Pope is un-English, Heine anti-German. What French artist in words is un-French?

Not only is French literature essentially French: the French mind has expressed itself in its literature more wholly than any other national mind. Written French by itself shows the people's stamp. Buffon's "*Le style c'est l'homme même*" might, if Buffon had looked at his own nation from the outside (which no Frenchman ever did), have been: "*Style in French is the very French nation.*" In prose and in poetry the French language is indeed the image of the French mind. No such wild divorce as between a Shelley, a Blake, and the average English national mind: flamboyant Baudelaire and tender, perverse, exquisite Verlaine wrote the right, the downright French tongue, the language that agrees so admirably with French thought. The splendid pathos of Lamartine and the splendid gloom of Vigny have the neat, sharp French form. Molière puts



exactly natural talk without an apparent effort into regular French verse. Racine into almost identically the same French verse (there is no English Molière and no English Racine, but fancy Dickens and Meredith writing in verse of identically the same metre) puts subtle sentiment. This same easy, cool, adaptable French verse, capable alike of realism, humour, delicate feeling, and some poetry is an image of the French mind. French prose has the self-same qualities as French verse: it is clear, precise, subtle, and definite. That French verse and French prose have the same qualities gives one key to the French mind. French thought, like French style, has all the virtues of reason, it has not unreasonable virtues. It is supremely human, it is not more than human. The French literary art has reached the highest prose, in verse as well as in prose; it has not often gone over the border, into the mysterious and unearthly land of poetry, and it has never gone as far in that magic country as other literary arts, such as the English, so much less accomplished in the works of prose. It tallies completely with the French spirit, incomparably alive to all human things, shrinking from any more than human, and inclined to call such less than human; incomparable in the finite, cowardly before the infinite.

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Though no human thought is less national than scientific thought, it would be possible and interesting for a man of science to study what



is specifically French in French science: the leaning, as in philosophic speculation, towards deduction rather than induction, the strong mathematical turn of mind, the strong repugnance for interpreting the world otherwise than in the sole forms of intelligence. But it is the French science of living that is peculiarly French. No people knows so well how to live, how it wants to live, and how to live in the way it wants. The great French *forte* is to posit life first of all as an axiom. No one in France asks whether it is worth living, and very few why it is to be lived. The deep French faith in life is too strong to give such questionings much of a chance. The French believe in life honestly as a precious thing, and when they speculate take its value for granted. Their art is first of all human, because nothing human is foreign to them; their poetry has almost never charmed magic casements opening on foam of perilous seas, because most things not human are foreign to them. Their life is a work of art, they are first of all artists in their lives. Ibsen talked of "living one's life": the little French bourgeois did it before, in his own way.

From the highest thoughts of French art to the humblest French social prejudices, the French spirit serves life on this earth. Ordinary French lives are human, as the greatest French writers have been human. They are planned and carried out. The peasant, knowing which fields which son and daughter will come into, and tilling them well that sons and daughters may take on the old duty of the soil; the black-

coated or shirtsleeved wage-earner of the town putting by out of tiny earnings—larger for the second than the first—that “the family” may carry on a “social position”; the little bourgeois, small capitalist, planning matches for son and daughter,—all are urged on by the strong French faith in life. It fails almost no Frenchman or Frenchwoman. I have met women sweeping the streets of Paris at three in the morning who had a “social position” (no one would have dared to laugh at them), and who spoke of hoping to raise their daughters to a perhaps better one. The postman, the policeman, the newspaper kiosk woman, the concierge, are at an almost exalted “social position” in humble French life. Who would laugh at Madame la Concierge, Madame la Marchande de Journaux? I would not. This is admirable faith in life. Let things be what they may, let ten-thousand or twenty-thousand-franc flats be let, no matter or so much the better, the concierge and the marchande de journaux live their own lives; they have their “social position.” Lost is he or she who has not; Madame la Concierge cuts (unless, of course, she has a good flat in her house) the lady whose social position is uncertain, may be flush to-day and rags to-morrow. Even in the flush to-day, Madame la Concierge, though polite, thinks things strongly. This is not only self-righteousness; she thinks that she is a real something in the town, an asset, a permanent value: she has a “social position.”

The French bourgeois who has a stake, more

or less large, in the country, is all faith in life. There is no other real idea in him. His religious faith, to which he almost always clings, must be a worldly, accommodating, and practical faith, such as the Roman Catholic Church, with serene and deep wisdom, provides. He would have nothing to do with mysticism, if mysticism ever entered his head. He is often as strict in some ways as a Puritan (he is not to be learnt from French novels), but he is never more rigid than life, he never tries to pretend for the sake of principle that life is not real. The lady who never was seen without her bonnet, because "life is a journey"; a great-grandfather of mine, who, finding my grandmother, ten years old, looking at herself in the glass with a new hat on, tore the hat from her head and threw it in the fire, saying her vanity proved her predestined damnation, could not have been French.

The French have the most common sense of all peoples, and I would back theirs any day against the English. As a people they have too much common sense, but a bourgeoisie cannot have too much. The latter's sense has often been noted and is easy to note, but that it has a deep root has not so often, I think, been seen. Faith in life is not a mere figure of speech: not only theatre-going and sitting at cafés, and the gentle *joie de vivre* of the French bourgeois. He really does believe in this life more than the British stockbroker. By the mild light of this faith he governs all he does. He tastes of all things moderately, of the divine, of ideas, of beauty; his is most probably the most all

round cultivated middle class in the world, and he has learnt just enough of ideas and beauty to get his temperate enjoyment out of letters and art. He will not shut his mind to them, like some other bourgeois of other countries; but there is no question of their running away with him. Life is his only really important thing: no fads, "movements," cranks come out of him or his. Cranks cannot have the really deep faith in life; he and his from birth to death unconsciously or half unconsciously obey it. All the traditions, prejudices, curious little customs of the French bourgeoisie are governed by it. The judicious blend of sentiment and hard cash upon which the Frenchman "founds a family" (the mere words are expressive); the all-importance of the Child, not a mere interesting event, as in some homes, but the heir to carry on the torch; the all-devotion of the mother, and the father's reverence (I dare say he keeps a mistress in another flat all the time); the boy growing up and cared for even to the watching over his first amours by his mother, with hardly shyness (shame she would call false), and the girl mated pleasantly and practically, the cycle thus completed and father and mother ready to die: this is all faith in life, for those who read French things truly.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FUTURE OF THE FRENCH SPIRIT

WILL the French spirit change or is it changing? There are small signs of change, there is no sign of a great change; or rather, the signs of lastingness are much stronger than the signs of change. The great war brought no change to the French spirit. Some of the feelings it stirred up had been drowsing, some tendencies of peace-time it suddenly suppressed. That it created a new France only those ignorant of France imagined. The warlike spirit has always been French. Patriotism, if it means jealous guardianship of a national character, has always been peculiarly French.

Seen in proper perspective the French intellectual character looks much more like persisting than evolving. Each intellectual generation rebels against the one before in an intellectually alive nation like the French; successive reactions do not seem to be altering the essential French spirit. In the first decade of the twentieth century new "Jeunes" started up in revolt against the previous Jeunes of the generation before, and as in Molière "changed all that"; scepticism and "Renanism" for faith and action, with which doubt ceases; speculation



for pragmatism ; intelligence and the intellectual interpretation of the universe for instinct and "Bergsonism." It all turned out to be a case of "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*"

Bergsonism promised the greatest transformation that would have been known in French philosophy : the dethroning of pure reason (Bergson's most masterly achievement in metaphysics) from the sovereign place in the world's riddle. That way mysticism lay, and we might at last have had French mystics. Not a bit of it ; simultaneously from political causes the Roman Catholic Church's influence upon the new *Jeunes* gained strength and the modern Roman Catholic Church has the greatest objection to mysticism. Thus Bergson formed a generation philosophically, and the generation could not carry Bergson out because at the same time it took again in part to the formal Church of Rome ; and the expected French mystics did not appear. In fact, the pre-Bergson generation was more mystical than that which Bergson's philosophy of instinct, spiritual intuition, and "vital spring," might have inoculated with mysticism. At the same time it took not a few years, but almost a few months, for the French spirit to rebel against the deposing of intelligence. Young men, typical without knowing it of the French spirit, rose in anger at the indignities put upon pure reason, and some in the name of the Church of Rome herself denounced the heresy that faith is not founded on reason. The French spirit shows no real signs of forsaking faith in intelligence. There lies its great

strength. At bottom, whatever wild and curious variations its fertile vitality may perform, it relies always upon the belief that the canons of human intelligence are not relative but absolute—absolute at least for this world, and the French spirit really cares about no other. Nor do I see any sign of the great French faith in life weakening. French vitality is not diminishing. If I add to my own experience of French life that of elders around me which goes back to the beginning of the Second Empire, I find that French life under the Third Republic is lived not only more strongly, but as carefully. More every day is got out of life, but life is not less well planned than before. Paris under the Second Empire was a gay little village compared with the Paris of the Third Republic. But there are few signs that even this hundred times faster living means any less philosophy of living. The family is the same strong unit it was before. Naïve French Juvenals prove my case by lamenting that girls go out alone. Fathers and mothers have a bit more struggle to keep their authority; still, they keep it. A law of the beginning of the twentieth century allows (horrible thought!) a son to marry without his parents' consent after he is thirty. Parents are as much compelled as ever to leave all their property, barring only a small fraction, to their children. Apart from and above laws, the great faith persists: the couple, from the first child born, holds a trust and hands it on when the children marry and bear children. It is a very old, a primeval trust; the French family, of the "gay

city " and the frivolous French nation, is primeval.

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Is the social and economic spirit of France changing? If it be changing anywhere, it is changing in Paris. Even in Paris I can see more signs of persistence than of change. The country's colonial economic policy evolves very slowly. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that private enterprise thought of working out such near possessions as Algeria and Tunisia. The Far Eastern colonies are not nearing proper development. Morocco is one of the greatest colonial empires any European country has gained, and though French enterprise is waking up to the huge chances there it will take France perhaps a century to make Morocco pay—by when, barring accidents, it will pay 100 per cent.

Slow development of the colonial riches which the French quickly and spiritedly won is the penalty for perfect national unity and extreme centralisation. The French soldier is splendid at storming, less good when he has to stand and wait. In the same way the French people is all fire for conquering colonies, and when they are conquered tires of them. Pegging out is much less interesting. The English coloniser takes to his job and finds a sort of gentleman farmer's pleasure in opening up a new country and making it pay. There are true French colonisers, but they are few: the bane of French colonies is the official, who, when honest

(and he sometimes is not that in the colonies) and not merely on the make, still is dangerous when he hates his job and wishes he were in Paris. French Indo-China has long been plagued by such men. They also are proofs of the French spirit, the bad side of it. They are being slowly weeded out, private enterprise is spreading out from home; like any resident in France, I know many cases of French business families "expatriated" (the word is characteristic) in order to work out their lives and their businesses in French colonies for themselves, and consequently to work the colonies for the mother-country. But the centripetal spirit still remains strong, and it still is spoken of that a French man of business has settled finally in Indo-China, in Morocco, even in Algeria, to work out his life and his family's future there: who bothers when an Englishman decides to start life in Australia?

Yet centralisation has its advantages even for the mother-country's colonies. It must not be forgotten that all French colonies are represented in Parliament at Paris, and that the deputy for Guadeloupe (however elected, and his election is generally a strange affair) or the deputy for Oran are on exactly the same footing as members for Seine or Seine-et-Oise. Most British colonies have self-government, but none have ever been offered representation in the Home Parliament, and India has neither. The domineering French spirit of political unity is at all events logical and fair.

In France herself some see signs of an economic



change, or at least in Paris. If the change does come it will be an upheaval. If France gives up her way of living it will be—no, if France gave up her way of living it would be—the most dangerous risk for her. Small land-ownerships absorbed, the peasant turned to wage-owner; small capitalists absorbed by trusts; small savings ceasing and the worker living from hand to mouth; the bourgeoisie spending and making no more than it spends; a few great wealths and no small woollen stockings,—it would be a very different and a very shaky France. A France thrown into a different economic world and unprepared for it.

French economic life is certainly not ready for concentration of forces and capital upon a few absorbing objects. French capital in its accumulated fractions can finance a dozen countries in Europe and America, but could not combine to dig for coal in Normandy, where accordingly, German capital, from German steel concerns, dug for coal to be sent straight across, via Amiens, to Germany. Here again is a penalty the French spirit, the French economic spirit this time, pays. Is it better or worse for a country to be timid in industrial business because almost every one in the nation owns something, or to be bold because the few own much? A very large question. The point here is that, were the French economic spirit to change, the change would be enormous. The country would be turned upside down.

The reduction of French freehold land-owners from millions to—as in Great Britain—thou-



sands, would be one of the most sweeping revolutions known. There are large capital owners in France, but their absorption of the millions of tiny French capitalists, though a much easier and swifter operation, would be as much of a revolution. In the French country I can see no sign of either such change. The peasant freeholder clings as much as ever to his land; he has no more children than before; he tills his land as religiously as ever; coming generations will inherit the land, the customs, the traditions; French fields are the last soil from which a revolution can be expected to spring.

The bourgeoisie is supposed to show the germs of the change. They are traced in the faster living, in the thirst for fun, especially in the motor-cars. I have heard terrible tales of French families which no longer put by dowries for their daughters, but spend the money on keeping a motor. The daughters themselves enjoy it, and live at a tremendous pace: Palais de Glace skating, Racing Club lawn tennis, tango teas. I have heard fearful predictions that in another generation the bourgeoisie will be found to have left nothing to its heirs. The generation before saved first and lived afterwards. Yet I cannot pretend to honest commiseration with the future descendants of the French bourgeoisie. They will be mightily taxed by the State most certainly; they will not have been left penniless by their forbears. The remarkable splash of luxury in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century, a display really equalled, all

things considered, neither in New York nor in London, was no "après nous le déluge" bon-fire. The Paris bourgeoisie let itself go; I wager that it did not let itself go as far as its tether. From what I have seen, I believe that the French bourgeoisie, though it has its fling, compared with which the Second Empire's gay life was a very short throw, still keeps enough energy and capital stored. The French spirit of social husbanding and social preservation has not spent itself.

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I have said already that the French are as much as ever, and want as much as ever to be, one nation. That is the simplest answer to the question, Is the French national spirit changing? In political theorising the French nation is probably the most vivacious and mercurial in the world; in the facts of political life it is one of the most steady and solid. A few—a very few—observers of France, myself included, persisted during a decade of French strikes, labour trouble, anti-militarist and anti-patriotic propaganda, roughly the first decade of the twentieth century, in calling France still the most solid country in Europe, and were derided for paradox-mongers. They afterwards had the satisfaction of seeing many come round to their views who before had said that France was in dissolution, preparatory either to the great anarchy or the great social regeneration—that depended upon their own political views. Similar waves of political agitation will pass over the French

nation. They will not affect any more the French national spirit, which runs deep. It would be quite wrong to say that the surface agitation and violent political theories of the French mean nothing; on the contrary, they form part of the French national character. But they do not change what else is essential in the French spirit.

I have attended some International Trade Union Congresses: an amusing thing to note is the patriotic fury of French delegates when other nations refuse to adopt their extreme resolutions; it has sometimes come to this that the body of French delegates has stood up like one man to denounce the Bœotian stupidity of the delegates of all other nations, for instance, for their refusal to resolve that in every case insurrection is the only policy for the wage-earning class immediately upon a declaration of international war. The French delegates in public are blind to the humour of the situation; in private most of them are intelligent enough to smile and to see that if anything proves most frontiers not to be artificial, it is an international trade union congress. I have met French Anarchists who became almost as angry with German Anarchists as with the French bourgeoisie.

The French are deeply and peculiarly one nation. The intelligent French "unified" Socialist (supposed to be "unified" out of the French nation into one Socialist party) feels this in his heart of hearts as much as anybody. He certainly feels it more really than the French member of the International smart set of

Europe that meets yearly, successively, with mechanical regularity in Paris, London, Trouville, Cowes, Scotland, French châteaux, Biarritz, Paris, San Moritz, Egypt, Monte Carlo, and Paris again, who nevertheless is naturally a militant conservative and violent patriot. The French international trade union congressman ends by denouncing the tepid delegate of other nations as un-French.

It is wrong to say that for the estimation of the French spirit extreme French political theorism is of no account, but it is quite right to say that in particular French anti-militarism and anti-patriotism mean exceedingly little. As for militarism, the French always have been, are, and in all probability will remain a military people. That is a detail. French patriotism is broader and essential. If French patriotism were to go, in a France where the native population remains almost stationary, there would be at some not-far-off day no France. There is, indeed, no fear for the French—or for the world—of that. It is certain that the French people instinctively understands its situation. That it declines to have more children than will make up for deaths (if that) series of statistics show; that it is determined to carry on France events prove. The one chance for France with a declining or stationary birth-rate is the French spirit: I believe the French people understand that.

The Great War showed that it did. In the first decade of the twentieth century French strikes and labour agitation stopped (for the



time being) suddenly. On July 1, 1911, came the "Coup d'Agadir." Nine months before, in October 1910, the great French railway strike had risen and been smashed down. Some evidence of national instinct is to be found by comparison of these dates. The German foreign policy anent Morocco which culminated in the "Coup d'Agadir" should, from the French point of view, have been invented if it had not existed, as Voltaire would have said—he said that of the Deity. The crucial dates of that policy were 1905 (the German Emperor at Tangier), 1908 (the dispute about the French Foreign Legion at Casablanca) and 1911. In 1905 Germany humbled France as she had never been humbled before except in 1871 and 1815 (and in 1815 the humiliation was more for Napoleon), and M. Delcassé was dismissed from the Quai d'Orsay at the German Emperor's bidding. In 1908, over an affray about a German enlisted in the Foreign Legion, Germany demanded an apology from France; France refused an apology; Germany then no longer asked for any. On July 1, 1911, at noon precisely (every one was just going off to lunch), the German Ambassador in person informed the Quai d'Orsay that Germany had sent the *Panther* to Agadir as a protest against French action in Morocco, and for three months European peace hung by a thread.

October 1910 marked, with M. Briand's rapid smashing of the railway strike (the greatest strike known in France, and I think, all things considered, in Europe), the end of a period of



French labour agitation. Neither M. Briand most certainly, nor, still more certainly, conscious public opinion, without whose support he could have done nothing, had foreseen the Coup d'Agadir. I believe the national instinct had. The great railway strike in October started to be one of the most formidable modern social revolutions known. Think of it: to get to London one had to motor to Calais, Brussels could be reached only by taxi-cab (if one had not one's own car), and, most frightful of all, the Calais-Méditerranée train de luxe ceased; the link which France makes with north-west and south, south-east and south-west Europe was suddenly snapped; the modern equivalents of the ancient routes which chose France because of her lie on the map were stopped: the strike precisely made one see the map in a flash and understand many much older problems of the road. The great railway strike was smashed within a week; the Premier, M. Briand, had (quite illegally, to all appearances) called out all railway servants as army reservists for active service, as for a mobilisation, and all strikers were thenceforth deserters, liable to court-martial. Every one knows that no Prime Minister in a democracy could do such a thing without public opinion behind him.

Public opinion must have unconsciously foreseen the Coup d'Agadir. A period of fierce labour ebullition in France precisely ended just before the third German blow at France in the twentieth century. I watched the French national spirit at work before that, at the time

of the Casablanca incident. I had also seen a far different France in 1905, when Parliament at the head showed abject funk, and M. Delcassé was sent away with hardly a word from Parliament, Press (except the dear old *Journal des Débats*), or country. In 1908, for three weeks the country expected war, shrugged its shoulders, said, "If there is to be war, let there be war," and I talked with peasants of the Île de France who did not love the idea of war, but philosophised: "Well, well, I suppose it must be, if it must be. My boy is doing his service at Nancy. I join on the second day as a territorial, on the order for mobilisation." Complete calm, and rather startling determination, everywhere. That was in 1908. The great railway strike came three years later and was killed; it was that national spirit that killed it.

The French spirit took a tonic at the Coup d'Agadir, but it had got ready for the tonic and that is why the tonic worked. The return to the three years' military service after that, to balance as far as possible German increased armament, was quite easily made: the opposition to the military measure was absurdly ineffectual compared with what could have been done in the first decade of the twentieth century, at the time of labour effervescence and before the French national spirit, temporarily lazy, had pulled itself together. The journalistic idea that the return to the three years' service was a move of Chauvinism was quite wrong. The national move was particularly important just because it was not a Jingo whim. It was in-

evitable, it was a mere matter of practical self-preservation, once the national spirit felt instinctively that a moment for self-assertion had again come by.

The vital instinct of peoples is very intelligent. The modern French national spirit is the most remarkable example. Here is a people, dwindling by its birth-rate, that is threatened simultaneously from within by social unrest and from without by a country more prolific and at least as powerful : it shuts up home trouble, it defies the foreigner. This is a singular proof of French vitality. There is a singular force in the French national spirit. I have shown that, in the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not cowed. I showed before that the French nation gradually compensates the decline of its birth-rate by its complete absorption of foreigners settled in its midst. The vitality of the French people is thus twice proved. France's vindication of her place in the world after Casablanca in 1908, and after Agadir in 1911, which was one of the most important factors in contemporary European politics up to the war, was not the assertion of a nation brimming over with men fit to fight, children growing up, women ready to bear children. It was the assertion of an old, ancient, civilised, perhaps henceforth limited nation, but of one that has a very strong will yet to live, to be one nation, and not on any account to be another nation. I think that this vitality is even stronger than that of a people which its numbers chiefly spread.

There is less sign than ever of the French

national spirit dying. The French-born people hardly, if at all, increases in numbers, but it holds its own more than ever. I imagine a day when the French people might be but a handful in Europe and would still keep together, like a last square of infantry charged on a battle-field. All national characters in Europe may die; the French will die last.

The war showed that it refused to die. That one of the purposes of the German aggression was to kill it is certain. To kill it without harshness, beyond that required by the needful "frightfulness" of war, to kill it even kindly, if the thing could be done; still, to kill it. German Kultur honestly believed the French national spirit to be a dying thing that it were merciful to despatch. Why, out of mistaken pity, let it linger? Better a cut of the knife, a short, sharp, frightful war, and German organisation would set all to rights, and make everything comfortable and satisfactory for everybody, the French themselves first of all. All the French wanted was to be taught what was good for them, and they would at once, with French cheerfulness and good sense, see reason. They had ceased to be a real people. They had all sorts of admirable qualities, none so ready to acknowledge them as Germany; but they were tired, and their qualities wanted bringing out and working up by German management. North-eastern France, from Picardy to Champagne, perhaps some Burgundy also, German provinces, strongly administered; the rest of France kept straight by proper business-



like Treaties of Commerce with Germany; France as a political power united with Germany by a well-knit, comprehensive alliance. France, in fact, run by Germany as a fine business venture, and on the best German methods: what more could France want?

The humour of it, or the ghastliness of it, was that German Kultur meant what it said; that it knew less of France than South Sea Islanders, judged France in 1914 as if it had never heard of history. Joan of Arc, the "Marseillaise," had German historians forgotten all about them? The French were a nation centuries before the Germans were, and a polished people when Prussians were serfs in bogs. The war proved the amazing modern German Kultur's mistake. The French are as determined as ever to be one nation. They have a great past; that is no reason why they should be effete to-day. The spirit of Joan of Arc is as alive as ever. More than that, more shrewdly and more clear-sightedly than that; the French fought for France, for their soil, their homesteads, but they fought also for Molière, Voltaire, Renan, for the French mind and the French spirit.

## CHAPTER V

### FRANCE AMONG THE NATIONS

It is very useful for a people to know what other peoples think about it. People, like men, judge themselves and find themselves judged differently. The knowledge is more than ever useful to-day when peoples are more and more sharply divided from one another, and when by a paradox of history frontiers are the more strictly defined the more international intercourse increases. The map of Europe is rigidly settled over every inch of soil to-day. In the Middle Ages the traveller, in months of journeying, crossed many vague frontiers; a student, a scholar, a monk, an adventurer, he was more or less at home among adventurers, monks, scholars, students, at many months' journey from home. To-day the Orient Express rushes us across Europe to Asia, but every few hours the sharp divisions of modern nations are shown us. The facilities of modern travelling may be wonderful, but what is much more wonderful is the barriers set up in spite of it over Europe: the deep frontier line like a chasm drawn, for instance, between a German train taken from Basel and a Swiss train taken from Basel, or between both and a French train taken from

Bâle. The medieval student walking across Europe never passed any such sharply drawn borderlines.

The French probably, of all peoples, knows itself best, yet can profit by the study of what others think of it. If national minds be considered, the French will be found to be intellectually the most arrogant mind. No other people, looking upon itself among other peoples, is as sure that it knows the truth. In the realm of abstract thought it is convinced that it reigns. French reason holds itself the standard of reason for the world; the French intellect does not doubt itself to be the best all-round intellect there is. No such intellectual assurance exists in any other modern nation: the English spirit is cocksure in many human activities, not in philosophy; the modern German mind is, or was, more than cocksure, but with an assurance obviously not resting on intellectual grounds. Perhaps only the Athenian mind in the age of Pericles had the same serene confidence as the French that it was right. The French intellect, as typical to-day as in the age of Louis XIV, is wide open to the thought of other nations, none more so; but it translates all into the terms of its own thought, thus in its own judgment setting the seal of truth and unity upon variety and flux. From other nations it awaits suggestion and fillip; to them it gives back reason, judgment, taste, measure, and human truth as far as there may be any. Other peoples, on the whole, accept the domineering French intellect. They agree that a new

theory, a new dream, a new aspiration becomes clear and definite only when it has passed the ruthless inspection of the French mind, that the latter has supremely the gift of expressing universally what a corner of the universe has thought particularly, and that a German thinker once said that he never understood German thinkers until their books had been translated into French.

They grant all that, but they timidly suggest that the French mind may limit itself, may cut down perhaps too many trees in order to see the wood, may not have dreamt of all things 'twixt heaven and earth. The French mind will not hear of the suggestion. It has not been shaken a hair's breadth from its self-assurance by contact with other national minds, however well it may have learnt to know them. On the plane of abstract thought the French mind is a rock never to be shaken. Intellectual vicissitudes, waves of thought and feeling pass beneath it : symbolism, mysticism passed without altering the essential French intellectual outlook. On this plane, probably, the French will never learn from other peoples ; never learn that some other peoples sometimes know a poetry, a sense of mystery more than they. The judgment of nations upon France in the sphere of thought is thus correct : she is easily supreme up to the highest point, at the highest she fails. One may add that compared with her they very often fail long before the top.

Upon French thought that is not speculative but practical, upon the French philosophy of



living the judgments of other nations are generally wrong. The French people is not regarded by others as the one that knows best how to live. It regards itself as the only one that knows what real life is : French life is the standard of lives, as the French intellect is the standard of intellects. Other nations bow intellectually, if with reservations, to the French intelligence, not pragmatically to French ways of life. This is a double mistake in them : if they quarrelled completely with the French mind, they should yet acknowledge French life. The fundamental French opinion, right down at the bottom of French feeling, is that the men and women of other peoples lead insane lives ; the general opinion of other peoples is that the French live amusingly, brilliantly, sometimes finely, but not seriously. There is more truth in the former than in the latter judgment.

If it came to choosing between the French bourgeois who calls any other way of living than his own mad and the divine average of other nations which thinks French life only skin-deep, it would be safer to side with the former. Acquaintance with French life inclines to sympathy with the steady French view that other ways of living indeed are mad. Other nations do not properly appreciate the human breadth of French life, to which nothing human is foreign ; it classifies and distinguishes, but it finally accepts in some way everything. It glorifies family life, and it acknowledges the free-lances. The father and mother are nowhere more honoured than in France, but the

skirmisher who never had the chance or the determination to "found a family" has his place also, and that he should live his life among the unattached women who are his equivalents is not the slightest disgrace to him or to them, or the least anomaly. Many other peoples endeavour to pretend that it is an anomaly. French family life is the strictest in Europe: the ties that bind a son to his house are never loosened in the opinion of the people. But the son may have a mistress in his young days: his own mother, knowing the world, will not blame him. She has followed the primeval law that women keep and men squander, and her daughter is brought up in her image. But there is no woman who knows life as well as a French mother and wife: the husband even strayeth, yet is gently brought back. The boy having learnt life and been taught with some blows (his mother consoled him without any shame) marries, and the family goes on. There is no hardness in this; the French family merely looks life in the face. It merely thinks that to exact from a boy the same chastity as from his sister, to judge alike the unfaithful wife and the unfaithful husband, is hypocrisy; that the only thing that matters finally is the hearth, the father and the mother and the children around it. They do keep round it, though there be no French word for home.

The other nations often might have less of the pretence of home and more of the thing. The French philosophy of life is the most broadly sane because it encompasses the greatest

variety of aspects : it unites sentiment with sense, combines business and romance in a judicious blend ; believes in the hearth and believes in the café ; is straitlaced at home, because home is serious and lasting, and accepts Palais-Royal farces, because farces are gay bubbles on the surface. French travellers do not observe the same all-round acceptance of life in other peoples. Here, the home is wrapped in a rosy cloud of sentimentality, and when the boys grow up they go off and many a father is undisturbed at not seeing them or even hearing of them again. There, the home is kept up in pleasant plenty and jolly human well-being, and when the head of the homes goes the jolly family finds it has nothing to live on. In a third, the pretence of home is kept up, and boys and girls are secretly or openly hungering for freedom, the freedom of ships' boys on tramp steamers, the freedom of girl drudges in a city office.

About French every-day life there is exceedingly little sentimentality. *Primum vivere* would certainly have been invented by the French. Their families are rational, practical, and natural associations for making the best business out of life. Natural affections bind French families together not less but more because the man and woman who found each one look at it squarely as a small society within society which must first of all get on in the world, not as the chance result of sexual passion or great love : at a pinch they might argue that the proper place for great love or sexual passion

is outside the family. A Frenchman is more capable than is imagined, more capable perhaps than the man of any other nation, of curbing a passion or renouncing a love, if he concludes it not to suit his own part in the great scheme of life. He is among the men of all nations the great realist; he has no patience with dreams about living impossible ideals, splendid intentions. "Qui veut faire l'ange fait la bête," said Pascal, and spoke for the French people. There is always a percentage of the men and women of other nations, for instance among Anglo-Saxons and Russians, which is aiming at the angel.

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Comparisons between the collective life of France and that of other countries are not the same as between the life of French men and women and that of men and women of other nations. Rather similar mistakes are made by other peoples in judging French national life as in judging French individual life, but in this case the French themselves are much to blame. Ignorance is the only excuse for the opinion that French men and women are frivolous; for the opinion that the French nation itself does not conduct its affairs seriously there is the additional excuse that the French themselves often think so or say they think so. They allow themselves ten times more latitude and fancy in judgments upon their public than they would dream of doing upon their private affairs. Some other nations are more sensible in their public than in their private lives, and I have known,



for instance, middle-class Englishmen who were quite sound on national husbandry and who died leaving wife and children penniless.

The French bourgeoisie knows its own business and talks guardedly about it, but talks wildly about the nation's affairs. It may be so careful of its own that it judges the management of the nation's by too strict a standard, but it does not seem to reflect that if the nation is really going to the dogs it will go thither too. The opinion that France has ceased to know how to manage her own affairs could be most easily obtained in conservative French drawing-rooms, and has been. It has perhaps, indeed, required foreign observers to show, even to Frenchmen, how still France has remained beneath the trouble on the surface.

Compared with the other nations of Europe, France may be said to show the greatest variability on the surface and the greatest fixity beneath. The bewildering changes of men and causes in French political life have had their counterpart nowhere else. Cabinets last a few months or weeks, sometimes a few days; a politician is pitchforked into the War Office, the Admiralty, the Government Department of Fine Arts, the Ministry of Justice indiscriminately, or coolly puts himself at the head of the Foreign Office, and, at a rearrangement of the Cabinet, the Minister of Agriculture, who had no notion of Agriculture, becomes head of the French Navy, or Home Secretary, without any more naval knowledge or knowledge of administration. The country is entirely used to this light way of

treating the business of the country. Party politics and political parties change with such rapidity that after six months' absence a returned politician has to learn the state of parties and groups all over again, and that politicians have been heard of who belonged to a party without knowing it, or who thought they belonged to a party until they discovered the party had excluded them. Political causes change almost as quickly; the defence of the Republic against Reaction one day, against Revolution the next, six months of State Socialism, then a sudden right-about-face and a year of social preservation; coquetting with Trade Unionism, then sudden panic fear of Syndicalism, and a fit of despotic repression. At the beginning of the present century the country went through violent social upheavals which threatened revolution, after the Dreyfus Case which threatened civil war ten years before, and Boulangism about ten years before that which threatened the upset of the Republic and the revival of autocracy. No other European country passed through such crises in modern times; none could have emerged from such crises fundamentally so unshaken.

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France among the nations, after being considered like a person in her character, must be considered in her politics as a nation. How, since the first French Revolution, have other nations behaved to France, and how has France

behaved to them? Burke's throwing of a dagger on the floor of the House of Commons remained (in spite of Sheridan saying, "There's the knife, where is the fork?") a meaning gesture in Europe. Among the ruling influences in the great European Powers there were several in the nineteenth century which, even in spite of alliance with France, echoed Burke. France remained (absurdly enough for all who know modern France) the firebrand of Europe. France herself did not understand in the slightest degree that this opinion of her persisted. France forgot what Europe thought of the French Revolution and of Napoleon; Europe still thought of both. At the beginning of the twentieth century it would have amazed all Frenchmen to be told that Prussia and Austria still remembered the iron fist of Napoleon, who then was France; that Russian autocracy, in spite of the alliance of nine years before, still trembled at memories of the first French Revolution. The great misunderstanding between France and Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century was that France had forgotten and Europe remembered the France of the beginning of that century. There was blindness on both sides; it was obtuse of Europe, looking at the Third Republic, to see visions of the old trampling and devastating spirit—and undoubtedly the new German Empire and Russia had such dreams, the former complacently; it was foolish of France to lose, because of the disaster of 1870-1, all recollection of the part she played before, that of the conqueror and tyrant of Europe.

No Frenchman, after 1871, said to himself that Sedan after all had paid for Jena.

After the disaster of 1870-1, if not the greatest that can befall such a nation, certainly the greatest that any nation recovered from as France recovered from it, the national duty for France was plain: a fallen Great Power, she must win back her place as a Great Power. At the same time the birth and stupendous growth of the German Empire set the great contemporary problem for Europe of the balance of power. France had to tackle that with the rest of Europe, but it was an extra hard and a particularly vital problem for her after her defeat. The Third Republic on the whole faced it steadily and courageously, consistently and successfully, and on the whole pursued a sensible European policy. The Second Empire had been less than a score of years of a fools' paradise. The Third Republic had hard facts to face. The attitude of Europe towards it was for long either suspicious or disingenuous; some Powers honestly feared a Republic like the first, with barefoot soldiers defeating the regulars of Europe and a conqueror springing out of their midst; some feigned the fear, for the sake of a chance of crushing France finally; others could not make up their minds which would suit them better, whether to let France be crushed, or whether to step in and prevent France being crushed, supposing she could be crushed. The time came when the problem in such terms ceased to exist; France had indisputably regained her rank as a Great Power. There was no longer a prob-



ability of her being crushed except by a coalition, and coalition raised that new question of the balance of power, which made contemporary European politics before the war more interesting perhaps than they had been at any time in history, and which will continue to make them interesting after it.

The Third Republic, somewhat troubled at home, showed a fairly even face to the foreigner. There were fewer changes in its foreign policy than in that of any other Great Power in Europe except the German Empire. In the first forty years of the Third Republic three periods may be considered from the European standpoint: colonial conquest, alliance with Russia, the Triple Entente. The first, had it been prolonged, might have made France a satellite in Europe of the German Empire; the second coincided with the period of Great Britain's "splendid isolation"; the third was that of the balance of power in Europe. French colonial conquest in Asia was openly favoured by Germany, Bismarck's policy being obvious; expeditions in Africa, not near home in Morocco, but eastwards to Fashoda (1898) brought France to the verge of war with Great Britain. But in the interval the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1891<sup>1</sup> had been concluded against Germany, and the foundations laid, visible to statesmen far-seeing enough, of the system by which the equilibrium of European forces was afterwards to be at least

<sup>1</sup> "The final declarations were exchanged on Aug. 27 (1891)" (C. de Freycinet: *Souvenirs*, 1878-93), M. de Freycinet being Prime Minister.

provisionally assured. The "Entente Cordiale" was deliberately offered by King Edward VII, acting "on his own" for his country in 1903, and after demurs was accepted by France<sup>1</sup>; the Triple Entente was a necessary corollary. Secondary elements will easily be fitted into the general scheme; the refusal of France—in the period of her colonial conquest in Asia—to co-operate with Great Britain in Egypt; gingerly attempts by some French Cabinets at an understanding with Germany, the realisation of which the French nation never would have accepted; the understanding with Italy, and the exchange of a "free hand" in Tripoli for one in Morocco, and alternate bickerings and flirtation with Italy; almost constantly cordial relations with Austria-Hungary, not to the satisfaction of the Triple Alliance.

Crucial dates from 1871 to 1914 in the relations of France to Europe need no commentary: 1891, the Franco-Russian Alliance; 1903 King Edward VII brought the offer of the Entente Cordiale to Paris; 1905 the German Emperor's visit to Tangier and its direct consequence, the fall of M. Delcassé from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Algeciras Conference about Morocco 1908, the "Casablanca incident," when over an affray between French and German agents Germany demanded an apology from France and was refused one, then said no more; 1911, the "Coup d'Agadir," the German warship suddenly

<sup>1</sup> The King visited Paris officially in May 1903. The Anglo-French Convention (*re* Egypt, Morocco, etc.), was signed on April 8, 1904.

sent to the Morocco coast, the subsequent cession by France of a portion of the Congo as the price for Morocco. The reconciliation between Great Britain and Russia, resulting in the Triple Entente, the capture of Tripoli from Turkey by Italy, the upheaval in the Balkans closing the Salonica road to Austria-Hungary, were other events that more or less directly concerned France. The French contribution to the balance of European power thus became clear. Up to the Franco-Russian Alliance there had been no equilibrium, but German predominance. After the Entente Cordiale, which was virtually the Triple Entente already, France, giving up shadowy rights in Egypt and given potential rights in Morocco, seemed there to be "biting more than she could chew." Of the three German countermoves the first in 1905 taught France this lesson: she could not count without Germany; she must be strong enough to count against Germany, or must count only as added to Germany. The second was met by a France that had made up her mind. The third found a France open to argument, but ready to return blows. A nice balance between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance was thus for the time adjusted; the alternative had been German hegemony. In the system which required almost hourly watching and nursing, France played her proper part. The Balkan Wars touched Austria-Hungary; instantly the German Empire strengthened its army; in a few months France increased hers all she could by returning from the two to the three years'

military service. The balance was kept, the game went on. Under the Third French Republic France came into her own again among the nations; hesitated, shilly-shallied, pulled herself together, lapsed, recovered, and at length weighed what she should in the balance of European power.

That balance was upset. One Power with one bold stroke bid for the mastery of Europe. In the period of the Third Republic's colonial expansion in the Far East, Germany, aiming at European hegemony, had manœuvred. After the Triple Entente, Germany used threats. Now it was blows. Logically, the first blow was aimed at France, to kill her. If the first blow had succeeded Germany would be mistress of Europe to-day. The nations rose and helped France to stand and strike back. Principally it was England's business, as it has generally been, to see that no nation ruled Europe. France, occasionally wooed, thrice threatened, now attacked, fought for her life. For her life first of all, and she showed indeed that she had come into her own place again among the nations. She did not fight alone, and alone she would have been crushed by the superior military organisation of a power organised for arms only. But she fought her share, vindicated her arms, showed that under the Third Republic she was a fighting people still. With her Allies she fought to prove that one Power cannot master Europe. She fought on her own to vindicate her defeated arms, to reconquer her natural frontier, to make French again a country that



for forty-three years Germany had never been able to make German. But France did not fight merely for all that, not only to avenge Sedan and win back Alsace-Lorraine. She fought for her place in the world first of all, but she fought also for her place in the world's thought. She fought Germany because she was attacked, she fought also for French intelligence and taste, French measure and culture. She fought for her life, she fought also against stupid arrogance. She fought unintelligent intellectual conceit presuming without taste, balance, or humour to teach the world the way it should think. She fought such an obtuse, untutored, comic megalomania as the world has never in an organised nation seen before.<sup>1</sup> Germany attacked her; the raw cheek of Germany setting out to reorganise the world's thought on neo-German lines shocked her sense of intellectual decency. France fought for her life, fought for the balance of power in Europe, fought for French thought, fought for intellectual sanity,

<sup>1</sup> "We are morally and intellectually beyond comparison above everybody else. The same is true of our organisations and our institutions. William II, *delicæ generis humani*, has always stood for peace, right, and honour. . . . We are the freest people on earth because we know how to obey. Our law is reason, our strength is the strength of the spirit, our victory the victory of thought. . . . In a wicked world we stand for love, and God is with us" (Professor Lasson, two letters to a Dutch magazine, 1914).

"Germany, thanks to her organising faculty, has reached a higher stage of civilisation than other peoples. They, thanks to the war, will one day be able to enjoy that higher civilisation. . . . What Germany wants is to organise Europe, for Europe hitherto has not been organised" (Professor Ostwald, in Swedish Press, 1914).

fought for the balance of mind that has been her great power in the world.

For while in history France, at her times of great political success, has rather disturbed than restored or helped balance, her greatest influence, which has not been political, upon the world has been towards a higher and deeper sort of equilibrium. The real part that France has played among the nations has been played by her thought, not by her action. The effect of the latter has been sharp and not lasting, the former has endured. The best political successes of France have not been what has most spread French influence. The victories of Louis Quatorze have long since spent their effect, the spirit of the *Siècle de Louis Quatorze* remains, and is a great part of France's influence to-day upon the world. Would there have been a *Siècle de Louis Quatorze* if he had not reigned in a time of French political success? Perhaps not, but it is the French mind of his time that has lasted whilst his political world is dead. Napoleon, with France behind him, upset and re-made Europe. What remains of his doings is almost nothing; the French mind lasts, and what has lasted of him is the part of influence he had upon it.

French thought has had great, French deed little, influence upon the world. English doings have lastingly changed the world, and the world remains impervious to English thought. French reason has to some extent fashioned all reasoning minds in the world after its image. It is a very notable thing that English influence has

spread little beyond English material power ; the influence of the French mind has spread to where French material power never existed. Sedan would have killed France among the nations, if it could have killed the French mind. After Sedan, France existed as much as ever by French thought. Now Sedan is avenged. France helps victoriously to readjust the balance of power, and rightly, because she has always set the pendulum to speculative thought. French reason among the minds of the nations is the greatest reason for France why she should keep her place among the nations. The mind prevails, but physical force helps it. In the long run the greatest force of French patriotism will be faith in French reason. I have heard French Anarchists who believed in no patriotisms violently prove French reason. They said they would not care if France lost her place among the nations. They would have cared extremely if French thought had dropped out of the thought of nations.

## CHAPTER VI

### GOVERNMENT : AUTHORITY

THE Third French Republic, as established by the Constitution which the Congress of Versailles voted by a majority of one on January 30, 1875,<sup>1</sup> is a constitutional monarchy with a monarch elected for seven years by both Houses of Parliament. It is not a Republic in the sense that the United States are a Republic. The President of the French Republic is not chosen by the French people as its leader, representative, and spokesman. He is not in an even remote degree, in theory or in practice, elected by the people. Parliamentary elections in no manner turn upon a past or coming Presidential election. If it happen that the four-yearly election by universal suffrage of the Chamber of Deputies or the triennial election by second

<sup>1</sup> "On Jan. 30, 1875—an ever-memorable date—the Assembly passed by a majority of one vote, 353 to 352, the Wallon amendment thus worded: 'The President of the Republic is elected for seven years' " (C. de Freycinet, *Souvenirs*). The Constitution of the Third Republic technically resides in the Constitutional laws also voted on Feb. 24 and 25 and July 16, 1875, modified by revision on July 22, 1879, and Aug. 1, 1884; but M. de Freycinet was right: the vote on Jan. 30, 1875, founded the Republic, as it defeated the plans (then ripe) of the Royalists for a return to an hereditary monarchy.



degree suffrage of a third of the Senate immediately follow or precede a Presidential election by Senate and Chamber together, the Presidential election neither of to-morrow nor of yesterday will be a "plank" in the parliamentary electioneering "platform." It would be unprecedented in the history of the Third Republic, and it would be foreign to the modern French political spirit, that it should be. Individual French citizens have not thought, and do not think, of choosing the Chief of the State. He is the spokesman of France when she speaks to other Great Powers. For seven years he is the successor of Louis Quatorze. The French people (all caricatures, satires, and comic songs notwithstanding) acknowledge him as such. Elected by Parliament, and not, as explained, even indirectly by the people, he is a seven-year-reign constitutional sovereign. His ministers do not represent France among other nations; he alone does. He is not responsible; his ministers are. The English adage, the King can do no wrong, applies exactly to the President of the French Republic. A superiority the President has is that he can resign; the King of England can only abdicate, which is revolutionary. The President may be indirectly forced to resign by a vote of Parliament; the King of England may be impeached, which of course is revolutionary also but in precedent. The President of the French Republic, like the King of England, is supreme lord of the forces on land and sea. He also signs treaties with foreign Powers. He has the right, with the sanction of the Senate, of

dissolving the Chamber of Deputies without the latter's consent.

As the Chief of a Republican State the French President occupies a position which is peculiar and might be called abnormal. His authority does not emanate from the people's will, and he is not responsible to the people. High powers, some handed down from the old monarchy and from the Empire, have been invested in him by the Constitution. They are not fully exercised; one, the right of dissolution of the Chamber, was only once exercised by MacMahon in 1877, and he was broken. The President holds his authority from Parliament; if, holding it from the French people, he were invested with the same powers, he might wield them with a bolder and less sparing hand. Not having risen through Parliament, he would be more independent of Parliament; he might be, once elected, equally independent of the people for seven years. On the other hand, the manner of the French President's election gives him in one sense a higher moral authority than probably he would derive from popular election; there are no nominations, no canvassing, no hustings, no speeches, no stumping the country, no big drum, no big stick in French presidential elections.

In the Third Republic, the powers of the President, and those of Cabinet, Parliament, and people form a nicely, not over steadily balanced system. The whole question of Presidential power is one of the most important and interesting in modern France. It has been, and must

continue to be, a crucial one in French politics and a chief concern of French politicians. Throughout the Third Republic a large political party has constantly urged a change in the form of Government which would allow of a much greater exercise of personal power by the President. It includes Imperialists and Monarchists, who would hail a more authoritative Presidency as the next best thing to a Monarchy or an Empire, and doubtless as the stepping-stone to a restoration of the one or the other. But it includes also many convinced Republicans, who on the contrary prefer the Republican form of Government at any price, but believe that greater personal power at the head would strengthen that form of government, and honestly have no fear of a return to any absolute ruler's government being the result. A considerable section of this party, including naturally all the Imperialists, advocates a radical constitutional change : the election of the President directly by the people, that is to say by plebiscitum. Another, perhaps a lesser, portion advocates, not a change in the manner of the Presidential election, but the vesting in a President still elected by Parliament of greater powers, such as the right to dissolve both Houses, to appoint high officers of State directly, and to appeal directly to the people in the case of a conflict with Parliament.

Undoubtedly a fair case can be made out against what the plebiscitary party, with partisan verve, calls the existing King Log system, which, however, rests quite as much on the usage and

precedent of the Third Republic as on the latter's constitutional law. The President may, if he chooses, be a perfectly passive figure-head. There is nothing in the Constitution that requires him to take any initiative whatever. He appoints his ministers, the sole action which the Constitution requires him to take; but, besides necessarily complying with the dictates of Parliament in which his ministers must be able to command a majority, he may shift the direct moral responsibility of his choice upon the two officers of State next to him in authority, the Presidents of the Senate and Chamber, whom by constant usage he first of all consults before calling any potential Premier. He may sign Acts of Parliament without perusing them. He may, against his better judgment, give his assent and signature to laws which he may not only believe to be bad for the country, but to the best of his ability know to be both unpopular and wrong. He may never put in a word at the Ministerial Councils over which he presides to stop a Cabinet's policy of which he disapproves and believes the country to disapprove. He may never open his mouth at Ministerial Councils; he may sleep soundly at them.

He may, as in *L'Habit Vert* and a dozen other comedies, farces, and revues, be the last to know anything that has happened on the boulevards, and be informed of the telegrams he has despatched two hours after they have been on the wires. In the exercise of his prerogative of mercy he may, like M. Fallières, reprieve the worst murderers one after the other, then sud-



denly let lesser criminals be guillotined by the dozen, because in the interval Parliament has passed a motion in favour of capital punishment being re-established. Nothing prevents him doing all these things or not doing them. Nothing prevents a constitutional King doing or not doing exactly the same things, with two exceptions in the case of the King of England, who firstly is excluded from the Councils of his Cabinet, whereas the President of the French Republic presides over those of his, and who secondly exercises the prerogative of mercy only through the Home Secretary, whereas the President of the French Republic exercises it absolutely and independently of the judicial "Committee of Reprieves." The President of the Third French Republic may quite well, if he likes, be no mentor, and never lead but always follow. In his relations with parliamentary life usage has indeed rather kept him passive than made him active. It has as often taught him to follow the dictates of intricate, shifting and sometimes sordid parliamentary party politics, as it has taught him to use his high impartial influence. Parliamentary life turned on high causes or low intrigues, on great national policies or the petty interwoven machinations of groups, caucuses, and lobby plotters. He did not interfere. No President protested, except Casimir-Périer, who did it blunderingly and with the same voice threw up his office. Would any constitutional King interfere any more in the same circumstances? That is the picture of King Log.

But in the fable King Stork came. French

Republican politicians have a constant dread of King Stork coming and eating them up. M. Clemenceau, "the Tiger," feared M. Poincaré devouring, not precisely him, but more generally France. M. Poincaré toured France, and the caucuses of the old Radical party cried out at "personal power." The idea of M. Poincaré turning dictator was comic. The fear of King Stork is not absurd. Superficial or biassed critics of the Third French Republic who hold that her Government has not instituted authority in democracy pass over ignorantly or wilfully a strong trait in the French national temper, which has an open passion for freedom, but also a lurking appetite for slavery. The same people that shook the world to win its rights gave its life immediately afterwards to serve the most glorious but the most exacting of autocrats. In quieter days the lessons of past drama remained true. It is absurd, but it is true, that a "patriotic" political party with a military backing thought for a week or two during the Dreyfus Case that pompous Félix Faure might be made into a Napoleon. A gentle and ambitious, weak and avid real Bonaparte had before been a second Emperor.

The Third French Republic has lasted precisely because, with a wisdom more instinctive and improvised than conscious and prepared, it guarded by a compromise almost new in French history against the surprises always to be expected from the French national character. Thus the political campaigns for an increase of powers in the Chief of the State are either rash

or treacherous to the Republic. Especially the party that advocates election of the President by the people directly must be blind—or can hardly be blind. Such an election could lead only to an autocracy. Every lover of France remembers with pain Boulangism when a poor, stupid figure of a man swept the country. It was not true, events showed, that the country really yearned for a master; Boulangism was a mere shameful fit of the French national appetite for slavery and the Third Republic did well to check it brutally. Had presidential elections been by the direct vote of the people, Boulanger might now be Emperor of the French; he would probably not have shot himself on his mistress's grave in Brussels. No student and lover of France will maintain that it would have been better that Boulanger had been Emperor of the French. The Third French Republic has been wise—wiser perhaps than any other Government of France in the nineteenth century, and different from any other by its politic spirit of compromise. For the first time in the history of French Republics the Republican system has successfully held its own against the lurking national foible which was typically if basely represented by Boulangism, and which otherwise the completely centralised organisation of the country does and has done everything to encourage. The election, by Senate and Chamber assembled in Congress in the old pompous but majestic palace of Versailles, of the President of the Republic has often seemed to me to be a picture of political prudence and some national dignity. Crowding,

crushing, chattering in the Gallery of Busts ; in the Assembly Hall, not a word but silent voting ; in the eyes of the law beforehand there has been no canvassing, there have been no candidates, and at the moment when the President of the Senate, lawful President of the National Assembly, declares that the ballot shall be opened, no Frenchman more than another stands for President of the Republic. The ballot, by absolute majority, or a vote of more than half the voters, declared, the Chief of the State in posse (his predecessor stays a month longer in office) goes home.

Nice balance is the soul of the system of parallel powers exercised by President, Cabinet, Parliament, and public opinion. The Constitution of the Third Republic was historically a makeshift. The half improvised, half patched régime has proved more lasting and more workable than any of the more elaborately and deliberately planned forms of government France gave herself during the nineteenth century. The fact might lead one to believe that, even for so logical a people as the French, some mere rule-of-thumb combining with logic makes a mixed method which answers best for political life. The compromise made, which was un-French, and more English than French, in the adjustment of Presidential power with the other powers of government worked satisfactorily in practice. It did not make a supreme office barren of influence. King Log has not been President of the Third French Republic, not even in the seven years of Armand Fallières, who



was the nearest thing to a wooden majesty. Jules Grévy, the honest bourgeois lawyer, betrayed and wrecked by a knave of a son-in-law, Daniel Wilson, who sold Orders of the Legion of Honour ; Sadi Carnot, the upright neutral man of starched, dryasdust culture, assassinated by the Anarchist Caserio ; Félix Faure, the perfect parvenu, carried off by amours and an apoplectic fit ; these, before M. Fallières, approached nearest to King Log. Yet, under Jules Grévy, the Third Republic, still in swaddling clothes, grew up against Pretenders to the Monarchy, against the still overwhelming Church of Rome ; under Sadi Carnot the Republic lived down, after the scandal of the sale of the Legion of Honour, the worse scandal of Panama, she crushed Boulangism, and she had nearly weathered the wave of Anarchist outrages when the President was assassinated ; as for Félix Faure, the military and militarist party during the Dreyfus Case almost thought of sweeping him up to a throne, and he seems to have thought it would. Between Sadi Carnot and Félix Faure Casimir-Périer for six months hesitated, then addressed a message of resignation to Parliament, saying that, unsupported in his office, he preferred to relinquish it. His reasons never were clearly explained ; the cause of his failure seems to have been chiefly want of tact. Neither Jules Grévy, nor Sadi Carnot, nor Félix Faure were King Log. Jules Grévy, a great lawyer when elected, was President while the Third Republic was still struggling ; in his first term of office Monarchy and Church were deliberately assail-

ing it ; his second term, half accomplished, ended in a partly undeserved catastrophe. Sadi Carnot was a colourless character, but it was not without some doing of his own, and it was in part because, like Jules Grévy, he wielded power enough to help hold the Republic together, that the Republic survived both Boulangism, which all but missed being a restoration of some Empire, and the Panama corruption of Parliament, which might well have made the strongest Government shiver for its fate. Félix Faure not only was no King Log, but probably intended to be King Stork, and might have been, if his many cares of etiquette, magnificence, and gallantry had let him.

Thiers, tiny Thiers, First President of the Third French Republic, stood up against Bismarck storming and stamping, kept him at bay, withstood him, and earned the name of *Liberator Patriae*. MacMahon tried to use his constitutional powers to bring back the Monarchy, and the Republic broke him. Émile Loubet, Armand Fallières' predecessor, saw the Third Republic through its worst crisis in the nineteenth century. He was elected in the midst of the Dreyfus Case in 1899. He came to the Palace of the Elysée (he has said so himself) "like a whipped dog." I can vouch for it : *quorum* (not of those who threw mud and stones at the new President of the Republic) *pars parva fui*. I saw Emile Loubet's first progress as elected President of the French Republic by the French Parliament ; hoots, yells, stones, mud, and for weeks on the Paris boulevards lampoons sold,

“ Panama Loubet,” M. Loubet having, as former Prime Minister, not been implicated in the Panama scandals (even the lampoons never hinted that) but winked at a fugitive Panamist corrupter of politicians, on the principle that for the country’s sake it was better to let fleeting bribers fleet. Seven years later, Emile Loubet, having announced that he would not again stand for the Presidency, and set a precedent that his successor Armand Fallières followed and that the latter’s successor Raymond Poincaré has said he will follow, retired; he went back, almost a peasant by extraction, a small bourgeois self-made, to a bourgeois flat and to his farm-manor and vineyards. He left office with the respect of all France and some prestige from foreign courts, where he, the almost peasant, bluff, sharp, canny, rugged, had been received as the representative of France. In the interval the Dreyfus Case had been settled, the greatest moral upheaval any people has known in modern times had been logically, rationally, and sentimentally levelled; France had passed from a paroxysm of conflicting passions for honest patriotism and honest justice to a tempered judgment both just and patriotic; Émile Loubet, who came in like a whipped dog, left honoured by his countrymen. A President of the Third Republic worthy of his office can so use the nice balance of power in which he is a part as to be a good ruler.

Even when opportunity for lasting influence—influence that in seven years helps to change the temper of a people—is not offered, the Presi-

dential part in the delicate balance is not nothing. Armand Fallières did nothing, and always followed ; he was perhaps a proof of the sufficiency of the system. He carried on what was handed on to him and never let it down, at least a useful achievement. The balance of power in the modern French State makes for permanency ; the price to be paid for greater energy and enterprise at the head might be upheaval and a return to the risks of autocracy. The force at the head is not negligible, as has been shown ; to give it the chance of being more assertive would probably not be a gain. In its modern organisation France may have precisely found a correction to its historical centralisation by this balance of the powers of President, Cabinet, Parliament, and people. So nice an equilibrium is almost new in the history of French government. It is still completely alien from the form of the subordinate system of French civil administration. The latter is hierarchical and systematised ; the Government at the head is a compromise, the first compromise the French nation has historically consented to in its leadership. The compromise asks for tact in the governor, for tact in the man corresponds to nicety in the system. M. Fallières' successor, Raymond Poincaré, is, as I know him, not the man to spoil the balance. Georges Clemenceau, the philosopher out of office, once the violent pragmatist in office, denounced him for an ambitious man ; he is precisely the man to carry on the torch, a more cultivated man than many who have preceded him at the helm of the Third



French Republic, and a more thoughtful man, but not one, perhaps precisely for that reason, to dislocate the adjustment by which the modern French State has obtained coherent and steady power ; in an adjective, a tactful man, and tact is wanted for the part. That tact should be wanted does not prove the system insecure ; well-oiled delicate machinery lasts long.

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It withstood the staggering shock of 1914. The Constitution of the Third Republic had not, any more than the British Constitution, been made with a view to war waging. It was swiftly adapted thereto, more swiftly than the British Constitution was, by the simplest processes : martial law, a state of siege, Parliament prorogued for six months, a dictatorship vested in the President acting through his Cabinet, laws passed and money raised or borrowed by decree, free speech and the liberty of the Press abolished, the liberty of the subject abolished, the control of Parliament and public opinion over the acts of Government swept away—every law and right made subservient to public safety. The country never winced. August 1, 1914, proved that the Constitution of the Third Republic could be turned in twelve hours (it was that fateful Saturday night) into an autocracy. The country knew in a flash what was at stake, and also remembered that it had known autocracy before. The Constitution of the Third Republic could not be charged with want of elasticity. Parliament reassembled at the end of 1914 ;

nothing changed. Parliament, having become accustomed to the war, made spasmodic attempts to assert itself, but the autocracy, in the name of public safety, continued. There has never been less sign of revolution or any political upheaval in France. "Revolution in Paris. Poincaré assassinated," said the German wireless.<sup>1</sup> The war brought infinitely less political agitation in France than Boulangism or Panama scandals or the Dreyfus Case had in peace time. Indeed, it brought none whatever; on the contrary, it seemed to have steadied the nation. No pretenders, no *coups d'état*, no uprisings, no communes would have had the ghost of a chance, if any one had thought the war gave the opportunity. The Third Republic, tried by the test of this war, has certainly proved its stability.

<sup>1</sup> The statements were, to my knowledge, posted up in Vienna hotels on Aug. 1, 1914.

## CHAPTER VII

### GOVERNMENT : PARLIAMENT

“ **WHITHER** bound ? ” A French friend met me on the Pont de la Concorde. “ Not to that evil resort ? ” No, I was going home. The “ mauvais lieu ” was the Chamber of Deputies. My friend was a vague man about town, whose only value was that he felt the pulse of Parisian society. Parisian society dismisses the Chamber of Deputies as a low place. Except two score or so Conservative members, no deputy is in society. In drawing-rooms where a Radical or Socialist member is received as a curiosity, he keeps quietly behind the arm-chairs and speaks when spoken to. He would often be afraid to speak ; he has little culture and no manner. Dozens of not uninfluential Deputies whom one has met are beneath the common commercial traveller in education, style, and even the speaking of the French language, the best spoken of all languages. Even when he is a distinguished Hellenist and a Unified Socialist combined (such a combination is a friend of mine) he is shy ; the deputy has no social prestige. My friend of the Pont de la Concorde was an enemy of the parliamentary system ; he had no ideas beyond that.

What would the enemies of French Parlia-

mentarianism put in its place ? They have only vague ideas themselves. Their only definite plan is the election by plebiscitum of a President of the Republic with certain powers of control over Parliament. No impartial and informed student of France can believe that such a régime, while it would satisfy the lurking love of autocracy in the French national character, would hold out long against the equally national, and on the whole stronger, instinct of freedom.

The parliamentary system in France is, of course, not indigenous, but imported. Perhaps the only people that has it in the blood is the English. Many of the peculiarities of its growth in France are explained by its origin. In England, on the one hand, it developed gradually through a long period of pure oligarchy, and on the other it grew slowly out of many local centres of authority, long solely aristocratic, which, as it grew, it fostered and which were always stronger compared with the British Crown than any similar local powers compared with the French Monarchy since Louis XIV. In France Parliamentarianism was almost suddenly planted upon a highly centralized country long used to autocracy, and it quickly developed into its most democratic form, with the abolition of the House of Peers and later of the Crown-appointed Senators.

In modern French Parliamentarianism the use and abuse of authority by the party in power is historically logical. The caucus that holds the majority says, with Louis XIV, "L'État, c'est moi." It "makes the elections" to keep in



power; the party that uses official pressure to coax electors, the officials who lend their influence, the electors who give their votes to the side whence official posts and jobs are to be had, all in part honestly believe that they are carrying out the right spirit of Government; the party in power is clothed with the awful majesty of the State and comes to believe, like Louis XIV, that it alone is responsible for the country's weal; the little local official and the village voter both ingenuously and dimly hold "Not' député" to be invested with some particle of divine right, because he belongs to the party that *is* the State, and religiously return him again. I could not count the church-going French peasants I have known who regularly voted for "anti-clerical" members, because the latter, having once won their seats, acquired the prestige of authority; M. le Curé for christenings, marriages, and extreme unction, but "Not' député" in some way, we do not know such things clearly, represents the State,—and the State, to the modern French citizen, is like the Crown to the French subject of old.

Such constituencies are what M. Aristide Briand, in a phrase that stuck, called "stagnant pools," which it is hoped (vainly, I think) to stir up some day by Proportional Representation. The unphilosophic French political observer does not see that the stagnant pools reflect the innate French respect for authority, which is one aspect of French patriotism.

At the source of authority, at the parliamentary fountain-head, the ghost of Louis XIV still

rules. Much of the internal policy and of the legislative programme of the Third Republic has, judged by Anglo-Saxon standards, seemed oppressive : the exile of Royalist and Imperialist Pretenders, the trial by the purely political and partisan High Court of Justice (the Senate) of Boulanger and others, then of Déroulède and others ; Anti-clericalism, and the refusal of freedom to the regular orders and to many of the teaching institutions of the Church of Rome. But these high-handed policies were perfectly honest. The country *had* to be saved from Boulangism, and the Church of Rome in France demands freedom, but would not let any one else have it. Even the offensively bumptious Member of Parliament who swaggers through French life (not French “ society ”) lords it in the state theatres (except the Français), rules the railways, over all of which he travels free and exacts a reserved compartment in a crowded express (fancy an English Member of Parliament never having to pay his railway fare) and at gala performances in honour of foreign sovereigns fills all the best seats with himself and his usually dowdy wife, to the sovereign’s astonishment, who expected to meet a smart house ; even he, the bumptious little local tyrant who abounds in the Chamber of Deputies, has a half honest belief that he is doing his duty to the people by his behaviour, being anointed with a little less than a 500th part of the sovereignty of the people.

In the country, authority is on an everlasting seesaw, the “ administration ” and Parliament.

“Not’ député” represents the State, but M. le Préfet represents the State also, and the Prefect is as permanent as an official dependent upon the Home Office can be. The Prefect may be afraid of the Deputy, if of the party in power; if the Deputy is in the Opposition, or even if he is not particularly influential in the majority, it will be he who will be afraid of the Prefect, and M. le Préfet will be a little Napoleon. This curious balance of authority is the more remarkable because “l’administration,” shaped by Napoleon I with materials from the Monarchy, is legally, in theory and to a great extent in practice, completely independent of Parliament, no offices whatever outside Parliament itself being legally dependent upon parliamentary elections. French enemies of Parliamentaryism cry out at its fostering of favouritism; the village schoolmaster, the rural *garde champêtre*, might not have got their posts without their Deputy’s influence, and the local smuggler may get off his fine with a letter from his Deputy. Favouritism of this sort is nothing compared with the system of countries where an elected President of the nation has hundreds of thousands of Government posts practically in his gift. But I would go so far as to say of French favouritism that it is not all to the bad. Enemies of Parliamentaryism in France do not seem to have reflected that the influence of the Deputy, dunning Ministers with demands for jobs for his favourites, is not all even useless, for there is another influence upon which it is a check, that of the central authority; if the *garde champêtre* did

not owe his appointment partly to his Deputy he would owe it entirely to the Prefect. The adversaries of Parliamentaryism in France would finally but hand over to a permanent central authority the power they would take from Parliament. Discussion of French national organisation always revolves round a fountain-head of authority.

Under all parliamentary party systems the first aim of every party is to get into power. This must be truer still of a Parliament split up, like the French, into a dozen fractions. Two great parties dividing a Parliament take office alternately. Among the dozens of French parties, the ultra-Conservative and the Unified Socialist parties cannot hope now for office, the former because it is too late, the latter because it is too soon. All the other parties by various combinations and coalitions can hold, and have held, office. Once in power, a party or coalition of parties tends to do nothing except all things that will keep it in. The state of French parliamentary parties is too confused, intricate, and changing to be described in detail.<sup>1</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> *Chamber 1902 :*

Socialists . . . . .	45	} Bloc, 353
Socialist Radicals . . . .	135	
Radicals . . . . .	90	
Republicans of the Left . .	83	
Progressists . . . . .	97	} Opposition, 237
Nationalists . . . . .	55	
Reactionaries . . . . .	85	
1 vacant seat . . . . .	1	
	<hr/> 591	

Footnote continued on next page.



history of the Third Republic, the latter having been finally instituted, an "Opportunist" party ruled; a party of practical politics with two main purposes, to help France to raise herself

Footnote continued from previous page:

*Chamber 1906:*

Unified Socialists	.	.	54	
Independent Socialists	.	.	20	
Socialist Radicals	.	.	135	Working Majority, 361
Radicals	.	.	116	
Republicans of the Left	.	.	90	
Progressists	.	.	68	
Nationalists	.	.	30	
Reactionaries	.	.	78	
			<u>591</u>	

*Chamber 1910:*

Unified Socialists	.	.	75	
Independent Socialists	.	.	24	
Socialist Radicals	.	.	{ 258 }	Working Majority, 360
Radicals	.	.		
Republicans of the Left	.	.		
Progressists	.	.	78	
Reactionaries	.	.	70	
Reactionaries	.	.	90	
2 vacant seats	.	.	2	
			<u>597</u>	

*Chamber 1914:*

Unified Socialists	.	.	101	
Independent Socialists	.	.	24	
Socialist Radicals and Radicals	.	.	261	
Republicans of the Left	.	.	53	
Democratic Left	.	.	32	
Republican Federation (Old Progressists)	.	.	37	
Action Libérale (Catholics)	.	.	23	
Royalists and Bonapartists	.	.	15	
Independent group	.	.	44	
Members in no group	.	.	7	
			<u>597</u>	

—as indeed she marvellously did—from the fall of 1870–1, the worst such a nation ever had, and to defend the Republic against enemies at home, the Church of Rome, always under suspicion, and demagogic and imperialist attempts like Boulangism. Radicalism then and Socialist Radicalism arose, offshoots of Opportunism, parties of practical politics still, but with programmes of social reforms, like the income tax. The Dreyfus Case drew a sudden sharp line through French political and public life; "Nationalism" was, or was thought to be, Boulangism over again. It was "Defend the Republic!" once more, and the "Bloc"<sup>1</sup> was formed for the Republic, a Republican coalition which this time included pure Socialists who had sprung up in the interval. "Nationalism" was identified with Clericalism putting up its head again, and the Church of Rome had undoubtedly won back power in the State and in the War Office particularly; the Bloc, the Dreyfus Case

<sup>1</sup> A name invented by Clemenceau in January 1891. A play by Sardou, *Thermidor*, in which Robespierre was the villain, having, after one performance at the Comédie Française, been forbidden, he upheld the veto in Parliament, saying, "The First Revolution is a 'bloc,' which you must take or leave." The name lived for years.

The "Bloc" was the majority produced by the Dreyfus Case, and including the Socialists. The International Socialist Congress of 1904 at Amsterdam "unified" Socialism, pledging Socialists to support no "bourgeois" Government. "Unified" Socialists, henceforth, were those who gave the pledge. Independent Socialists, Socialist Radicals, and Radicals became in practice one party, with the Republicans of the left for its right wing, right meaning Conservative, left Liberal, and all terms being taken comparatively. The remaining parties were the real Right of Parliament.

settled, started to realise the old dream of advanced Republicans, and the Church of Rome, with the French Reformed Church and the Jewish Church, all three established by Napoleon I, were disestablished. But before Disestablishment was completed the Bloc (though holding together to that end) was split; the Socialist party was "unified."

Henceforth <sup>1</sup> the Unified Socialists at one end, with the Royalists and Imperialists, who at election after election had slowly dwindled, at the other, held aloof from the main body of Republican politicians. At the same time some of the latter had receded to Conservatism and Clericalism, taking the paradoxical names of Progressists and "Action libérale," while "Socialist" Radicalism, on the other hand, ceased to pretend to be Socialist and tended to drop the useless name. The Radicals became in a sense the true conservative Republican party, having only a limited programme of social reforms and desiring no other change,<sup>2</sup> whereas the so-called Conservatives, Royalists, Imperialists, or those with paradoxical names, desired such changes as a return to Monarchy or Empire, or at least re-establishment of the Church of Rome. Confusion was increased by the splitting up of the main Republican party, already divided roughly into the Radicals and the heirs of the Opportunists, into several "groups,"

<sup>1</sup> Amsterdam Congress, 1904. Disestablishment of the Churches, 1905-7.

<sup>2</sup> Especially not Proportional Representation, by which it feared to lose seats, whereas the Unified Socialists and most of the extreme Conservatives hotly championed the "R.P."

some exclusive, some overlapping.<sup>1</sup> Governing in Parliament became a perpetual puzzle : on which vote which “ groups ” would make up the majority ? Sometimes the Unified Socialists would come in and half the Radicals stay out ; sometimes all the Conservatives would come in with the Unified Socialists, and all the Radicals go in the minority ; sometimes the Unified Socialists would be in opposition and all the Radicals with the Government. All the time the Senate reflected the Chamber, though always toning down the reflection, as became an assembly elected by second degree, not universal, suffrage, and renewed not at once but by thirds triennially, yet holding greater powers than the House of Lords even before the Veto Bill, for the free assent of the Senate to all bills whatsoever is required before they can become law. The Senate was split up also into groups corresponding closely to those of the Chamber, but with one important exception : no “ Unified Socialist ” has yet found his way into the Senate.

<sup>1</sup> The groups exist only for and through purely party politics. Quite distinct are the Senate and Chamber “ Commissions,” committees chosen proportionately from all parties. These commissions, an institution peculiar to French Parliamentaryism, and a valuable one, do in practice the bulk of the work of the French Parliament, and do it discreetly, their proceedings being private. They include the Commission on Foreign Affairs, the Commission on Finance, etc., and the Chairman of one or the other is in effect a deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs or Minister of Finance. The Ministers appear regularly before the Commissions and unburthen themselves, or are cross-examined, always under the seal of secrecy. The system thus allows of considerable business being discharged more expeditiously than in parliamentary public debate.



The day-to-day observer of French parliamentary life, bewildered by the spectacle of kaleidoscopic and conflicting factions, sees only a future of creeping paralysis for French parliamentary politics. The more detached student looks beyond to an inevitable great change, and wonders how it will come, in France of all countries. The deep cleavage between Socialism and all the other parties must eventually happen in the French Parliament. Mr. Bodley said that the ruling parties in the Third Republic had, by the end of the nineteenth century, exhausted all their political constructive programme. There is some truth in the statement, though it is exaggerated through the author's bias. What is true is that France is a deeply conservative country. The Republican party, from Moderates to Radicals (who are in a sense Conservatives and who are less radical than English Radicals), has few measures to carry through: the heavier taxation of capital, the abolition or recast of the Senate—the former not a stirring measure, the latter an improbable one, for other things will come to pass before even the mode of election of the Senate is changed. Great party programmes are in abeyance for a time. Parties will go on defending the Republic against the Church, against “Reaction,” against Pretenders, sometimes usefully, sometimes unnecessarily. This useful work in the past will, even when still useful in the future, be elbowed aside; the great cleavage must come some day. When French parties are divided into Socialism and Anti-Socialism,

the Unified Socialists on one side and on the other Radicals, Moderate Republicans, perhaps Churchmen, Royalists, Imperialists also, allied against the Unified Socialists, what will happen ? That is the unknown.

What Socialism will come to in France is one of the biggest problems in the world for social students. The French political Socialist party is the most powerful in the world, and next to the German the most numerous. Within the present generation the Unified Socialist party may capture half the Chamber ; in the Chamber of 1910 and 1914<sup>1</sup> it could in many cases save or upset a Cabinet ; in the British Parliament the Socialist party is almost a cypher. How much does French Socialism count in the country ? One is afraid to say how little one thinks it counts. In industrial centres the Socialist vote predominates ; but French Trade Unions have little organisation and less money. The French coal miner, poorly paid, seldom pays his union subscription, whereas the British Miners' Unions are the stronghold of Trade Unionism. Over the land the peasant freeholder reigns ; communism, nationalisation of the land have not, as far as one can see, attracted him one whit or diverted him one hair's-breadth from his tilling, his hoarding and his individualism. There is no latifundia question in France and Mr. Lloyd George would have had to seek there another occupation ; nor is there any question whatsoever of adopting free trade or of loosening agricultural pro-

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 102.

tectionism. Yet the Unified Socialists sat 75 strong in the 1910 Chamber, 101 in that of 1914, and often dictated to the party in power ; among their numbers are some of the men who count most in the parliamentary world ; many of their political ideas have become truisms in French political life. What can it come to, when the French Parliament is divided into Unified Socialists on the one side and all the other parties, from Republicans to Royalists, on the other ? The great cleavage must be. No observer doubts that, but none doubts that, however sharp in Parliament, it will paradoxically be vague in the country. Who knows the French peasant and his glebe cannot think of a French social revolution to-day. We must always count with French idealism that made the first French Revolution and sends a phalanx of pledged " Unified Socialists " to the Chamber ; but, barring the chance of a sudden wave sweeping over the country, the French will not be the first, but the last, to make the social revolution of the future.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GOVERNMENT : ORGANISATION

THE public affairs of the French nation are managed not solely, or even principally, by the governing combination that consists of the Chief of the State acting through his responsible Ministers under the control of Parliament. French national organisation is, as it persists to-day, not only older, but other than the French parliamentary system and its constitutional Monarchy with a Parliament-elected seven years' monarch. The total product may be called the rule of a bureaucracy and a parliamentary system tempering, helping, or hindering one another. The final or the immediate problem of French Government is to determine how far and how the bureaucracy and the parliamentary system are to hinder, help, and temper one another. Unless and until the face of French society is changed by a great social upheaval, all questions of domestic statesmanship for this country will resolve themselves into that one. A balance of power between permanent officialdom and the authority vested for four years by electors in their representatives; the permanent administrative body subjected to the people's temporary representa-



tives and through them to electoral committees, caucuses, and parish pump conspiracies; bureaucracy supreme and a Parliament legislating only by suggestions and controlling only formally: the choice is among these three methods. The increasing foes of the parliamentary system in France under the Third Republic have always argued, in substance, that the first method failed or that the second succeeded only too well. The third, which clearly was the method of Napoleonic government, has not by any means been lost sight of under the Third Republic.

The parliamentary system in France was grafted on to an organisation of government which had with it no likeness or tie. "*L'Administration*" is the oldest, most centralised, most unified power of its kind in the world. It dates back to Napoleon, who had the centralising genius; its foundations are centuries older, and were laid while the French Crown was making the one France. But there was more local self-government under the Monarchy than there is even under the Third Republic to-day; it was only the Corsican upstart's Empire that at last built with the century-old materials left by the Monarchy the iron, mathematical, hierarchical "*administration*" of France that would have satisfied the ideal of Louis XIV.

In French domestic questions, in conflicts of Parliament versus permanent authority, of electoral caucuses versus state officials, it must always be remembered that the central authority, which does not depend upon the vote of

the people except through indirect and devious causes, wields an unequalled power. The German Empire, in home management, must consult Bavaria, Saxony; the Russian provincial governor is far and remarkably free; in England the central authority has no lieutenant outside London except shadowy lieutenants of the county. I have already mentioned the French Home Office and its strong tentacles stretched out over the whole country through the Prefect of each department and his sub-prefects, all directly answerable to the Place Beauvau only, completely independent of and superior to all local authority. Go to any provincial capital and note the prestige of M. le Préfet; Mayor, Senator, Deputy, General commanding the Army Corps, Bishop, Protestant Pastor, Rabbi, all stand up when he appears. Through its telephone with him the Place Beauvau keeps an immediate ear watching the provinces and a voice of direct authority; the Prefect, even on his own sole initiative, can require the General commanding to bring out his Army Corps and occupy the country for the greater safety of the State.

The Ministry of Justice in Paris holds in its hand almost the entire judicial system of the country, for, barring the supreme Judges like those of the Court of Cassation and Premiers Présidents, every Magistrate and Judge of the French judicial personnel, which is extraordinarily and quite superfluously numerous, is a civil servant dependent upon headquarters for promotion and liable to dismissal by them. More

than that, the French Judge, from the beginning of his career, has been a state servant ; he began as some deputy public prosecutor in a small provincial town. To have reached high judicial office he must have early begun state service, which alone leads to it ; the bar can under no circumstances ever lead thither. French counsel not only cannot be appointed to the bench, but by tradition form a caste distinct and antagonistic ; on the French bench sits a man who for the greater part of his career prosecuted for the State and never by any possible means could have been counsel for the defence, and who now must judge. That the French Judge, with his one-sided training, can be as fair as he is, is remarkable ; the system by compensation gives great power and independence to the French bar, but it proves the power of the French State.

The State Department of Public Instruction and Fine Arts rules education throughout the country. Provincial universities have no independence and little power. The University of Paris, the oldest in history, dispossessed by the First Revolution and Napoleon, recovered its charter only at the beginning of this century. The Minister of Public Instruction in Paris directs primary and secondary education throughout France. The curriculum in every state school and college is the same, the examinations for university degrees are the same. All teachers, from primary schoolmasters to university professors, are Government servants ; no independent body whatever exists in the national system of education. The State also cares for the

artistic sense of the nation. The French State is the only one in the world that does so. Here I am considering only organisation of the State. The French State yearly buys pictures (with fallible taste) and places them in museums all over the country, perpetually pays and controls stages for music and drama.

Can a good man for porter at the state-subsidised Opera-house get the job without the influence of one or a dozen members of Parliament? (The first French state theatre, the *Comédie Française*, by some miracle, preserves an extraordinary independence.) May a public prosecutor prosecute and fear no Cabinet orders coming between him and his duty? There is the whole question, from the bottom to the top, of the conflict between the permanent French "Administration" and four-year Parliamentary Government. There would be no question of that kind at all if judicial posts were elective and if the staff of state-subsidised theatres changed at each parliamentary election. The conflict exists in France precisely because the "Administration"—from Government offices to state-theatre offices—is permanent and powerful; it is a struggle of parliamentary party influences to capture the strength of the bureaucracy for their own ends. It is well worth a party's while to have as many of its own Prefects as possible who each are Viceroy over just under a ninetieth part of France, and as many as possible of its own village schoolmasters, who make village political opinion. When party influence gains control of so strong a bureaucracy



as the French the result is not good for the country. The spectacle of some French elections "made" by a party in power through its Prefects and Sub-prefects is a shock to believers in democracy. But at the base lies not so much the French parliamentary system as the strong and ancient French permanent organisation. What party could "make elections" if Prefects and Sub-prefects had not a century of accepted authority behind them?

The French domestic problem is to adjust this permanent organisation with the parliamentary system, a combination not yet satisfactorily achieved. Short-sighted French enemies of the parliamentary system in France see that the parts do not yet fit, but do not see why. The French democracy cannot aim at less Parliamentary Government; increase of bureaucratic power cannot be a safe modern course. It also would be alien to the national character, and it might be unsafe for national stability, to adjust the parts by weakening the old permanent part.

French officialdom may sometimes be the servant, the tool, or the prey of political factions (therein lies the whole question); but it remains through the storms or breezes very much itself, an ancient, solid, dogged, simple-minded body. The official mind is hereditary; the civil servant with a tiny salary hands down from father to son an amusing, pathetic, but a respectable pride of caste. "Functionarism" has shown recent small signs of waning, and instead of ten young bourgeois competing for one post there have been only half a dozen, the other four

striking with much boldness out into business. But if a change ever comes it will be (always barring the great social upheaval, and even that might after all make eventually for a stronger bureaucracy than ever) by imperceptible degrees. For very long a head clerk at the Government department of Stamps, Registry, and Domains will possess a pride and enjoy a prestige denied to a grocer earning ten times as much and worth a hundred times as much.

No one who has not lived long in France can appreciate the prestige of the French civil servant, the "functionary." The "Crise du fonctionnarisme" has been spoken of ; instead of a hundred candidates, as formerly, for one job in the Paris municipal services, for instance, there have been only fifty or even ten. The "Crisis" does not seriously threaten the prestige of the "functionary." The latter is measured not only in moral values but in francs ; other things equal, a "functionary" may look to a bride with a much larger dowry than many a man who is not a "functionary." In the marriage market one may say that a clerk of the Treasury with a salary of 5,000 francs a year is easily the equal of a man in business making 15,000 francs a year ; expectations in dowries are corresponding. Thus does the Civil Service occasionally marry into grocery, pork-butchery, or the retail wine and spirit business. But, as a rule, it marries among itself and keeps up a caste, one that seems absurd to grocery (when not inter-married with it), that the big bourgeoisie of business looks down upon as comical, and that "society"

ignores ; but a caste all the same, a caste and almost an order of proud and upright men and families. The feelings of a "keeper of mortgages" not only keeping his mortgages for the State, but keeping his family by daily care and often daily self-sacrifice up to the tremendous appearances which in a French provincial town a keeper of mortgages' family must keep, cannot be understood outside provincial France. The amusing pride goes with admirable honesty. There is no such honest and honourable civil service in the world as in France : at the top a few black sheep, throughout the millions of "functionaries" below not one backslider. Not one financial and political scandal in France that has touched the mass of civil servants ; a Public Prosecutor has been influenced by a Prime Minister, and it has been a scandal. In forty years of published scandals under the Third Republic there has not been one case of a corrupt Judge ; there have been one or two cases of corrupt civil servants in other services ; there have been too many cases of corrupt members of Parliament. In the Panama scandal, in other scandals, not one civil servant was implicated ; the "functionary" on his tiny salary is the most incorruptible public servant in the world. You even dare not try to tip a French policeman. The traveller harassed by the vexatious French customs officer sometimes wishes the French functionary were not so incorruptible ; it has never been recorded that any one ever had the courage to offer a *douanier* a bribe.

The "functionary" lives in a proud little

world of his own, and by his numbers and traditions makes up a great world of his own in the French people. He does not call himself a public servant; he would rather call himself one of the rulers and tutors of an undisciplined and ignorant public. I was once nearly arrested for telling a French State Railway station-master that, after all, he was a servant of the public: "No, Monsieur, I am not a servant of the public, I am a functionary," and was summoning the police, but the train started. The functionary feels himself to be a pillar of an ancient State. He is not democratic, he is not aristocratic, he does not care a fig for social prestige; he will rather delight in annoying any important person whose importance is not derived from the State. The abstract State is his only deity; he is not democratic or aristocratic, he is, in the word coined by the French (because they have the thing), *étatiste*. The tiniest Government clerk says to himself in his own tiny sphere, "L'État, c'est moi," and because he says so is honest, proud, and often in daily French life a nuisance to the public. Though worried, the public would never really ask to be rid of him, nor would observers and admirers of France; the smallest French functionary really feels that he discharges a function in the organism of the French State.

When the great trial came some of these humble civil servants were found amazingly to be the stuff heroes are made of. Some bolted before the invading Hun; many, I think most, stuck to their small posts, which became choice



posts of danger. Imagine a keeper of mortgages, a tax-collector of a quiet little town of Northern France standing up against a Prussian General backed up by an overrunning army. He often did it. He sometimes paid for it with his life, often with months of imprisonment. It was he, the little functionary, who was taken for hostage at Lille, Cambrai, Valenciennes, everywhere in invaded France. It was justices of the peace who were held accountable for the payment of unpayable levies, it was mayors of little towns who were shot when a distraught German C.O. thought he had heard of "francs-tireurs." Some of these humble incarnations of the French State who were comic in peace time their very "fonctionnarisme" made great in face of the invader. One will never smile any more at the little French *fonctionnaires*, as long as one remembers those of the Nord, the Ardennes, and Meurthe-et-Moselle. A roll-call of humbled heroes is henceforth bound up with the records of French functionarism.

In the future it is impossible to imagine that the permanent organisation of the French State will not last at least as long as elective Parliamentary Government; one can easily imagine it lasting much longer. Parliamentary power, even though favouritism and abuse of influence spread much more than now, will not really sap state authority. A small functionary may sometimes cringe (and have to cringe) to a powerful politician; suppose the politician removed by a common accident of public life, and the functionary springs up again instantly, his

own little part of state authority as strong as ever, if not stronger, for it will take the politician or another one some time to crop up again or crop up. Ministers come and go, and the more rapidly they succeed one another the more the power of permanent Under-Secretaries grows; in the extreme case of an unprepared politician pitchforking himself into the Foreign Office, the foreign policy of France during the Minister's stay in office is literally in the sole hands of the "Director of political affairs" at the Quai d'Orsay, who for that time is virtually the spokesman of France in the councils of the world.

If in the future a French constitutional change, it need be but a comparatively small one, reduce Parliamentary power even slightly, the power of the permanent State will be more than proportionately increased. A great social change is thinkable which might smash the parliamentary system altogether; the permanent French State would, *ipso facto*, become almost all-powerful. Thus a great social upheaval in France might soon produce a reversion to an historically much older form of government. Owing to the permanent internal organisation of the country, the chances are that a temporarily successful attempt to reorganise France according to one of the many and various schemes of Socialism or Communism would shortly surprise its authors by leading back to an autocracy. Changing institutions is meaningless if the spirit ruling the organism remains, and there are no signs of the spirit that rules the French organism changing.

## CHAPTER IX

### GOVERNMENT : FRANCE BEYOND THE SEAS

THE French have been good colonising pioneers—and lost many of the best colonies they founded, for instance in the East Indies and in Canada. In the Empire beyond the seas which they did keep, and which in the years of colonial expansion policy encouraged by Germany they greatly increased—an Empire of over 4,000,000 square miles in Africa and over 300,000 in Asia—the efficiency of their rule was not considered anything to boast about even by themselves, except in Algeria, where French administration is universally acknowledged to have been for many years past liberal and wise. Elsewhere in their Colonial Empire, they hardly ever professed to be good administrators, and they were the sharpest critics of their own colonial rule. What evils of Government existed in the mother-country were generally said to exist tenfold in the colonies. Parliamentary elections in such constituencies as Martinique and La Guadeloupe were commonly known to be a farce. The colonial official was regarded as being naturally on the make. His aversion from posts in the colonies was considered to be quite

reasonable; it was held to be a matter of course that the less he went out to any, and the more he stayed at home in the Colonial Office, the more promotion he got, and that when he did reluctantly go out to take up a post in France beyond the seas he worked off his disgust and bad temper upon the natives over whom he had to rule. Scandals of mal-administration in the Colonies were common gossip in Paris for years, and ferociously satirical plays showing them up were enjoyed in Paris theatres.

In the great cataclysm that came over France in August 1914 she herself scarcely even noticed one thing: her vast colonial empire of over 4,300,000 square miles was not stirred a hair's-breadth. Her enemy had agents, official and secret, everywhere, avowedly out to stir up rebellion and preach deliverance from the French yoke. From Tonkin to Annam, from Madagascar to Morocco, all France beyond the seas remained absolutely loyal. No criticisms of French colonial administration prevail against that fact. The mother-country, plunged in that great tragedy, had no time to grasp herself what that fact meant, what this one particular fact, for instance, meant—the German army advancing on Paris, and French hold unshaken over the immense Moroccan Empire.

At the outbreak of war one frightened French Cabinet Minister actually was for clearing out of Morocco instantly; the immediate danger must be met, everything else must go by the board; scrap Morocco. On January 28,



1915, the Mohammedan religious festivity of Mulud was celebrated in Morocco under French rule in perfect peace with more brilliant ceremony and rejoicings than ever known before. On July 14, 1915, the French National Fête was celebrated in Morocco with ceremonies and rejoicings and exchange of visits and tea-parties between the Sultan and the French Resident-General, General Lyautey.

In August 1914 Berber tribes, long canvassed patiently and actively by German emissaries, were in open revolt. Not only tribes that had always rebelled at French protectorate were on the war-path, but others that had submitted were restless and ready for a war of independence. A curtain of the French troops stationed in Morocco was pushed forward to keep warring and agitating tribes in check. Behind were formed territorial and reserve troops either called out on the spot or brought from France. All other available troops of the French Corps of occupation in Morocco were sent to the mother-country. By October 26, 1914, General Lyautey could report that 39 battalions, 16 squadrons, 8 mounted batteries and 5 Companies of Engineers from the French Corps of occupation in Morocco had been sent to fight in France.

He could report also that over all the territory occupied by the French in Morocco there was peace and no trace of discontent, that the Berbers held in check by the curtain of French regulars were absolutely cowed, and that throughout the country in French occupation all public

works, the building of roads, railways, etc., had been carried on as usual. At the deadliest moment of the war in France, the Casablanca Fair, encouraged, managed, and stage-managed by the French, was in full swing, and Moorish merchants vied with each other to show their wares and deck their tents with their best family curios. Incidentally General Lyautey announced that all German propaganda in Morocco was crushed. The Holy War preached in the name of his Islamic Majesty the German Emperor against the French infidels had never come off, and German agents had been shot. Chief among them were Karl Ficke and Grundler, both tried at Casablanca and executed there on January 28, 1915, the day of the Moham-medan festivity of Mulud. There was some tragedy in Ficke's end. He was a personal friend of the German Emperor's and a highly important person, and when the French officer came and read over the sentence to be carried out in one hour, Ficke laughed, "You French do like a joke," and asked for breakfast. Half an hour later, the officer came back and said there was only half an hour left. "You are carrying the joke too far," said Ficke, "you forget who I am." A few minutes before his end the wretched man at last really understood, and collapsed.

His Islamic Majesty the Emperor William II's speech from the throne in the late Chamber of Deputies in Paris, at the conclusion of which the representatives of the vanquished nation kissed the Imperial hand, was reported

in the Turkish press on December 6, 1914. At about the same time General Lyautey reported that almost the whole contingent of the younger Moorish troops, which had been formed in 1911, and had mutinied dangerously in April 1912, were then fighting for France in France, and incidentally also that Emir Khaled, grandson of Abd El Kader (the old foe of the French during the conquest of Algeria 1832-47) whom Germany announced to be leading the rebellion against the French in Morocco, was a Captain of Spahis fighting on the French Front and had just been made an officer of the Legion of Honour. Morocco under General Lyautey from 1914 proved that France, after all, is not inefficient beyond the seas.

Not only was there no trace of disaffection among natives under French rule when the war came, the severest test for the colonial rule of France as it was for that of England, and borne triumphantly by both Empires. Natives flocked to defend France on French soil, a France that to them was a far fabulous country, on soil they had never seen. I met myself hundreds of African blacks, in a military hospital for maimed, who had each lost a limb fighting for France. They were big funny children even in their infirmity. The chief difficulty the hospital had was to keep Senegalese from fighting Moroccans, because they accused the latter of not being really French, whereas the Moroccans swore they were. I used in a small way to look after these maimed black simple friends of France, and remember having one, who had no

feet left, to lunch. He was enormous, coal black, a huge grinning baby with shining teeth, he had won the Military Cross for extraordinary bravery; he had come straight from Central Africa, hundreds of miles from the coast, to fight for France in Flanders; he had never seen Flanders or France, or even the African coast before, or any country but his mid-African village where he had left two wives, and he had fought for France and lost both feet and was joyous. He meant to go back and tell how he had fought for France and be a hero in his village and buy two more wives with his saved-up pay and the allowance for his medal. He and his fellow blacks were perfect comrades with the French maimed, who petted them like children, and made huge fun of them, in that hospital where every man was a war cripple and almost all were gay and cheery with a cheeriness that brought tears into one's eyes.

Arabs from Algeria and Tunisia, blacks from French West Africa, Senegal, Guinea, Ivory Coast, fought for France in France, fought sometimes like demons. The Arabs of Algeria and Tunisia were officially gazetted to have won distinction at the battles of Charleroi, and were thus early in the field, having been rushed over with a promptitude that said much for French mobilisation and the British Navy. They were also praised for gallant conduct in the battle of the Marne, and later in wet, uncongenial Flanders, in the German battle for Calais that failed. The Moors distinguished themselves chiefly in Artois



and in Champagne, in the spring and autumn of 1915.

These African subjects of France, who disappointed German hopes and not only did not rebel against France, but fought for her on her own soil, were almost all volunteers. In Algeria and Tunisia the Moslem Sharpshooter troops were all volunteers. A measure for instituting regular military service was being prepared when the war broke out. Jewish Algerians, however, hold rights of French citizenship, and are liable to conscription like French colonists, serving chiefly in the Zouaves. There are many native officers and N.C.O.'s, both Moslem and Jewish, some native officers having passed through the military schools in Paris. Moorish and Senegalese troops, "Moroccan Sharpshooters," and "Senegalese Sharpshooters" were and are all volunteers, with a few native officers. French Congo (busy helping to conquer German Cameroon) and Madagascar levy volunteer troops kept in the country. Indo-China native troops put down desultory risings led by German agents in Laos and Yunnan.

French organisation beyond the seas thus at a critical hour stood the supreme test well, with a success surprising indeed to a great many of the French themselves, most of whom had had but little faith in their colonies. A handful of Frenchmen have been and are inspired colonists, with a dash of Livingstone's genius for dealing with alien and lower races and winning them. The remainder of French colonials are officials, mostly bored, who would rather be in France, or who

make a hobby of some native language or totemism in order to forget the natives they have to rule or do business with. It was that handful that saved French colonies for France in a critical hour. A great English colonist told me once: "Natives trust us because we are fair. The French they sometimes love." The French officer of Arab, Senegalese, Moroccan troops, a father among his children, is that sort of Frenchman, and he probably saved the colonies of France.

Without this human factor French colonial organisation would probably have stood no test at all. Yet it is quite fair and logical—only too logical. It is liberal as no other colonial system of any colonial power is. France grants parliamentary representation to all her colonies; no other colonial power does anything of the kind. Algeria, reasonably of course, an old colony with French settlers and intelligent Arabs, sends seven members to the Paris Chamber and three to the Paris Senate. Senegal, Guyana, the remnants of French possessions in the East Indies, and Cochin-China return among them four members in the Paris Chamber of Deputies, and Cochin-China returns a Senator also. All the deputies are elected by universal suffrage. In these colonies French colonists, of course, have the franchise, and also natives, but only those who are "naturalised French citizens," and such naturalisation is granted only with good reason; other natives are French subjects, not citizens, and cannot vote. Thus, in Senegal the Senegalese have not much to do with the elections

of the Senegalese member in the Paris Parliament; no doubt a wise arrangement. But in the French Antilles, in Martinique, in Guadeloupe, and in La Réunion, these being "old French colonies," all inhabitants of French nationality are French citizens and all males, white or coloured, have the franchise. And an election there is a comic-opera business, and the member returned, who has often scarcely set eyes on his constituency, is the first to smile in private at his own election.

Centralisation for French unity at the top, tempered by local human knowledge: that is French colonial rule. Throughout French colonies the Code Napoléon is the law to which all natives who have received French citizenship are amenable. But Moslem law, Brahman law, and in Indo-China local laws, are applied in civil cases by the French courts. Municipal government in Algeria, Tunisia, and Indo-China is for a considerable part entrusted to natives, and even also in French West Africa, for Lieutenant Dinah Salifou, son of a nigger ex-kinglet of Sudan, enemy to the French (the French Colonial Office tells me) was Commissioner of Police at Brazzaville in 1914 when the war broke out. He afterwards fought for France and won the Legion of Honour for gallantry.

I am also officially informed that, after the war, native rights and privileges will most probably be much extended in Africa in reward for the loyalty natives showed to France. I well believe it. For France beyond the seas, one thing stands out to-day. The faults and formalism

and officialism of her colonial organisation do not count. What counts is that, while the enemy still held Lille, her colonial empire from Morocco to Tonkin was not by a hair's-breadth shaken ; and that Arabs, Senegalese, Moors, fought for France in France that they had never seen before.



## CHAPTER X

### ARMS : IN PEACE

THE need to be well armed always was at least as essential for France as for any other nation to-day. The position of France among the nations of Europe is a simple and straight proof of the common-sense judgment that, to keep its place, a people must first be materially strong. The German Empire founded in 1871 was an equally immediate proof that mastery by material strength brings material gain, and the sole fact of the modern German Empire exploded the fallacy that no war is profitable. If ever French arms were clearly weaker than German, the date would soon be fixed when France must choose between being crushed by Germany or becoming a political satellite of Germany. These are mere facts there is no getting away from. When one considers the position of France in Europe, one ceases to consider disarmament even as an interesting dream. Balance of power is a great deal more interesting. Arms are a vital need of France, and are bound up with national life. Arms and the people, arms and the State, are as important to consider as the arms themselves.

At Besançon and Belfort I followed an au-

tumn's grand manœuvres as a layman. In my hotel the officers' chauffeurs dined. They were a Jew banker's son, a duke's son, sons of lesser millionaires, and lesser grand seigneurs, sons of the wealthy bourgeoisie. They were privates, one or two of them corporals, in the Army. They had all brought their own motor-cars and servants. They dined well, some had their actress friends with them. The next morning at daybreak, each one (his servant suppressed and told off to loaf) took his car, and awaited orders from a captain or lieutenant risen from the humblest bourgeoisie, when not, in the army sense, from the ranks, and with his pay of 300 or 400 francs a month to live on. Banker's son and duke's son became the poor church-mouse captain's or subaltern's chauffeur and drove his own car at his officer's orders. At dinner a few days afterwards I heard how the chauffeurs, back again in my hotel, had ingeniously managed to stop always at inns that would not strain their officer's purses. They made no sneers, no irony, no jokes among themselves. The poor plebeian officer was their officer to them still, when they were off duty dining with the best Besançon champagne and their actress friends. I have never understood why every democrat in every country does not urge compulsory manhood military service.

French arms and the people are indissolubly bound, and the Army is certainly the most democratic institution in France. It is probably the most democratic army and the most democratic institution in the world. That it is

so is little understood outside France, and is not much reflected upon by Frenchmen themselves. French life is not democratic; the social scale remains after many revolutions as sharply marked off as ever, and lines of demarcation grow rather deeper than fainter with time; while old castes do not lose but gain prestige, precisely because Republics create no new mobility of title, to them are added new castes of wealth and position, and by the same process the old bourgeoisie is marked off from the parvenu bourgeoisie; finally and simply, the mere outward class differences that are defined by more or less money are sharper in modern France than they ever were before. When young Frenchmen of twenty (or, up to 1914, twenty-one) are called to serve with the colours, all these differences, of caste, class, wealth disappear more completely than any one judging *a priori* would think possible. In my Paris University days my fellow-students served one year in the Army; younger friends served two, and the sons of my seniors served three; the experience of all is the same. The recruit ("le bleu") seen off by fond and delicate or rough mother in the train that will take him to his first barracks, from that moment all caste and class is wiped out, until the boy comes back an "old" soldier discharged. The *thou* of the French language begins it, and every soldier "tutoye" another, the *vous* being between officers and men, unless a paternal colonel say *tu*, without of course reciprocity. Among those who say *tu* to each other, absolute equality, without a shade of distinction. "Thou

who art a bourgeois in civilian life," a navy's son will remark by the way to a banker's son. The banker's son is naturally expected to stand drinks; he has no other privilege. French barracks have some of the spirit of the English public school, but spreading far more widely, spreading indeed over all society. In the school a boy boasting to a stockbroker's son that he is a duke's son is kicked; in the barracks a "bleu" boasting to a bricklayer's son that he is a duke's son or that his father keeps a château and six motor-cars, will for ever after be told off on potato-peeling duty, the trooper's particular dread. The brotherhood of arms has become a real fact only in modern national armies, and is nowhere as real, I believe from all I have seen and heard, as in the French Army. Fastidious French friends of mine have learnt to know their own people only by serving in the army, and some have kept friendships throughout life with barrack mates. One of them, getting out of his motor-car at the Opera, recognised the chauffeur of another car, went up to him, shook hands with a "How art thou, *mon vieux*?" and talked barrack-room recollections with him for five minutes, after which one settled to wait for his master, and the other went to join the ladies in his box. Troopers come up from the east to Paris together on leave, one is met at the station by footman and chauffeur with the car, the other by his mother in her workaday black dress without a hat; that makes no shadow of difference between regimental pals. Before the sub-lieutenant all troopers are on exactly the



same footing. "Soldier Rothschild, peel the potatoes," "Soldier Rohan, wash out the lavatories," are orders that attract no attention whatever. The ordinary trooper would be astounded to be told that they might surprise some people. I have heard of peasant or workman troopers learning after a year or two of barracks, that (for instance) comrade Caumont was trooper de Caumont La Force, heir to the Duke de La Force. "Don't stuff me," was all they said, and hit Caumont in the pit of the stomach. Take the men among themselves, or take the behaviour of the officers to the men : a lieutenant who has struggled through his military schooling by scholarships and very plain living, and who, perhaps with wife and child—the wife must by the army regulations have brought a dowry of about 1,000 francs a year—must live up to his uniform and gold stripes on 7 francs or so a day, treats trooper Rothschild or trooper Rohan both without favour and without jealousy, and neither can ever say that he has peeled potatoes more often than in his turn. The devotion of the French subaltern officer to his sole military duty, every other consideration obliterated, is admirable. The equality of French troopers before the subaltern who commands them is perfect. In the French nation compulsory military service has been the most thorough school of democracy.

It has also been a good school of common national feeling. No country that has not known universal conscription can understand what a national freemasonry it forms, and of

all European nations I think the French has had the most national Army. Universal military service welds Army and nation into one. All able-bodied Frenchmen have common barrack-life memories of their first years of manhood; allusions to it, jokes about it, stage-plays about it, the recall of its slang, appeal to all. Such and such a farce about barrack life has run thousands of nights because the peasant, the navvy, the aristocrat, the artist, the poet, can all honestly laugh at it. The same simple joke tickles them all, and the exquisite artist with the rest, because it takes him back to when he was twenty and one of an army of fresh, healthy twenty-year-olds, in whom art, birth, wealth, loutishness, vulgarity, poverty, were all mixed. Not only social castes and classes of thought, but historic differences of race and clime are fused by French military service. The War Office each year scientifically mixes its contingent of recruits with extraordinary care and thoroughness; the Breton and the Basque go together in Paris, the northern miner goes to southern villages, the Parisian artisan goes to the German frontier.<sup>1</sup> Think what an education for a twenty-year-old people this mere shuffling of places during military service means. The garrison of Paris, for the most part, is made up

<sup>1</sup> For many years under the Third Republic the War Office's invariable rule was to send each recruit to serve in a region distant from his native place. "Recrutement régional" afterwards altered the system, but the old rule holds good for certain provinces and for large towns. Thus Parisians never serve in or near Paris, and serve usually on the German frontier, while the Paris garrison is recruited from distant rural districts.

of peasants who would not have left their fields otherwise, and may never see Paris again. The garrisons of the eastern frontier, the "Iron division" of Nancy, are to a large extent made up of smart, sharp, hot-headed Parisians, who would never otherwise have known what is meant by such discipline as is in the air a few miles from the border over which war will come. Thus for several generations the interpenetration of all elements of the nation has been helped by military service,<sup>1</sup> and the purposes of French national defence have served French unity.

The same course has not, I think, been followed to the same extent in other European nations where military service is universal and compulsory. It was said of the French Army that the only able-bodied Frenchmen who did not know what conscription was were the officers of the Army; amended laws have changed that, and officers serve a year as privates before taking their commission. But even before it was so, the French officer was already much more a man among his men than in most other armies. There has not been in modern times a military officers' caste in France. There are a few small castes as in all armies, the smart aristocracy that goes into the cavalry, the scientific intellectuals of the engineers and artillery, the country aristocracy that chooses the Navy; there is no

<sup>1</sup> From the Second Empire onwards: 7 years, with option to pay for substitutes; 5 years, 4 years, with many exemptions; 3 years with reduction to one year for students taking university degrees; 2 years for all (1905 law); return to the 3 years (1913) this time for all.

officers' caste, as in the Prussian Army, and the French officer elbows nobody off the pavement, not even his orderly. He feels himself honestly and simply to be but a part of the nation, armed in self-defence.

The solidarity of the young nation in arms and of the older nation that remains in the reserves and may be called out, of officers and men, of castes and classes of men among themselves, is the measure of French military patriotism. By it the importance of French anti-militarist propaganda may be judged. Anti-militarism in France has been active and violent, it has won proselytes in the trade unions, has canvassed in the very barracks by spoken word and written tracts, sometimes with apparent success; and "if war be declared, shoot your officers, and there will be no war," has been more or less its declaration of policy, and a Prime Minister of France several times over (M. Briand) told French workmen (some time, of course, before he thought of becoming Prime Minister) to use pikes and guns against their officers to prevent war. Words was all that amounted to. Words had no chance against the fact of the nation's solidarity in arms. The benefits of peace are apparent to all; it is idle to talk of the evils of armed peace to a people that finds in arms, not through warlike purposes but by circumstances and national character, one of the strongest links that bind it together. Against the reddest anti-militarism of the most revolutionary navy must be set off that he was the pal of peasant and millionaire while he



served his three years. Anti-militarism weakens modern military strength by splitting it after the pattern of civilian society ; the strength of French arms precisely is that they unite France.

The best military expert in the world could not undertake to estimate exactly the fighting value of the French Army, or of any modern army. The actual worth for warfare of every great European standing army, as of every great navy, was an unknown quantity. No one could foresee certainly how all the vast and elaborate machinery built up for years to that end would work when put to the test. No conclusive technical comparisons of the French and German Armies had been or could be made. The general judgments of impartial observers were that the German cavalry was superior, the French artillery superior ; that the German infantry was better disciplined and that the French infantry marched better ; that German organisation at the top was better, French intelligence down to the rank and file greater. My own judgment was only that of a civilian who had observed both armies in peace time. Two things, indeed, struck me : German organisation and French intelligence. At army manoeuvres the quick understanding in French regiments of subalterns, of sergeants and corporals, of leading privates, is remarkable ; they jump to fairly complete comprehension of wide strategic movements (still utterly enigmatic at that stage to the layman) and are a conscious part of the machine : I met companies of sharp-shooters, Zouaves, they were—a score of

privates with a sergeant or perhaps a sergeant-major in command—who behind a hedge, miles from the headquarters staff and out of sight of, and seemingly out of touch with, their own side, could give a logical and reasonable account of the sham battle that was going on. At German army manœuvres the headquarters staff knows everything; below, no one knows or tries to know anything, and the subaltern is blindly uncomprehending, the non-commissioned officer blankly obedient, the private a machine. But the machinery is powerful. The French organise up to a point, then strangely fail; or rather, the other way about, they plan well and the plan is carried out down to a certain point, then miscarries. Anyhow, German organisation is pursued and executed with a complete minuteness not found on the French side. A slow German express train arrives to the second at each suburban station; a French express flies at twenty miles more an hour, and two or three times a week comes up a half an hour late, owing to causes unexplained. French and German military strength are perhaps the hare and the tortoise, one thought in peace time; but no one knew whether the slow-witted tortoise would outwit the quick-witted hare, and military experts knew no more than any one else.

French guns and French gunners; the astonishing smartness with which a French battery uncouples and brings its guns into action, or the skill with which it will thread its way at full gallop through an army, down crowded roads or through ploughed fields; the ingenuity

of French artillery officers, like the inventor of the hydropneumatic recoil brake or the plain artillery captain who thought of (and never got anything for it) the simple and cheap device adapted to shells which enabled existing French field-guns to compete successfully with new German guns and which saved the French War Office 80 or 100,000,000 francs; the intelligence of officers and of the rank and file; the extraordinary patriotism and (what is more) common sense with which the people that supplies that rank and file accepted the return to the three years' military service after nearly nine years of the lesser burthen,<sup>1</sup> an increase of duty to the country which can be appreciated only by those who have known or watched compulsory military service, and have seen what it means to take a boy beginning life away from his field, his business, his trade or his profession, not for two but for three years at twenty; the simple sensible acceptance of the return to the three years by the country merely as a question of arithmetic and because there was no other way of keeping pace with the ever-swelling armed hordes east of the Rhine,—all these were the French assets, against, on the German side, German organisation and German numbers.

Arms and the nation have served each other faithfully under the Third Republic. It has been a long, exacting, costly strain, and will grow a greater one, not a lesser. Neither the Army nor the nation has grudged pains or money to win victory. The Navy alone has been sacri-

<sup>1</sup> Two years' service, 1905. Return to three years, end of 1913.

ficed : France, by her geographical position, should have been the first naval Power in Europe, and it is a good many years since she lost the second place. Her strength on sea is kept up by the tradition of old families, who make naval officers of their sons, and of the fisherfolk of Normandy, Brittany, and to some extent of the Mediterranean coast, who always serve in the Navy and remain in the naval reserves. The nation has come to feel that its fate in European fights will always be settled on land. French national existence depends upon the French Army.

The standing, or rather the "active" Army, is the first French fighting line, stretched for the most part along the eastern frontier of France, and the reserve of the army is all the male able-bodied French nation up to middle age. But the French nation has sometimes had to consider its standing Army apart from itself; not the Army but the officers' corps, not the latter but cliques among the latter; not, in fact, the latter at all, but factions of politicians trying to use them. In this narrow sense, arms and the nation, or arms and the State, have been at times separate and a political dualism.

Under the Third Republic no officer and no soldier has the franchise; no officer can vote until retired from the Army, and no other citizen can vote until he has completed his term of compulsory military service. The Second Empire gave the Army, officers and men, the vote for the *plébiscites*, which were supposed to prove that the rule of Napoleon III was founded upon



the people's will; the Army, as a body, was ordered to vote Yes for the Empire, and almost without a dissentient voice obeyed. This use of military power for political purposes availed Napoleon III little in the last resort, for the second and last *plébiscite* was taken and showed an enormous majority for the Empire a few months before the crash of the Franco-Prussian War, Sedan, and the fall of the Empire. Under the Third Republic there have been attempts, never yet successful, to use the Army to political ends. It is obvious that in a democracy keeping up a standing Army which consists of a permanent corps of officers, whose sole profession for life is arms, and, for the rest, of the whole male youth of the nation in its first years of manhood, the danger to the State of political currents of opinion in the Army must be great. On the other hand, national conscription is precisely a safeguard, for the youth that forms the rank and file, if it show any political movements of opinion at all, must reflect exactly those of the nation, being the total youth of the nation. The corps of officers remains, which in a sense is cut off from the nation, being the only voluntary professional soldiers, and as such excluded from the franchise and never possessing, therefore, a voice in the conduct of the nation's affairs. Political questions involving arms and the nation have thus concerned only the corps of officers. Two difficulties of this kind have been met with by the Third Republic: the ever-present, if dormant, French national love of autocracy, and the influence of the

Church. All political crises in which the Army, represented by the corps of officers, seemed to assume an irregular voice in the State arose from one of those or from connected causes. Boulangism and the Dreyfus Case were the chief of these crises. A general was put up by a political faction to try to be a second Bonaparte, and if the mettle had been in him the Army possibly would have risen and borne him to something like a first Consulship and perhaps an imperial throne; over a quarrel whether a Jew captain was wrongly or rightly convicted of treason a political faction (it was more or less the same faction against the Jew) stirred a part of the corps of officers up to the honest belief that they were the real France and charged with the mission to save France. With the former crisis the Church had little, with the second much, to do. Boulangism was a mild modern version of an attempt by a Prætorian guard upon the State. In the Dreyfus Case crisis, religious differences much deeper were called up; the same worked in the lesser crisis at the time of the disestablishment of the Churches by the Republic.

In everyday French regimental life, religion plays no part. No one has ever met a French trooper whose religious belief affected his position in his regiment, nor a French officer whose behaviour towards his men was influenced by his or their religions. French military service is as undenominational as it is democratic; more than that, it is completely free from all religious and also anti-religious bias: in a long

acquaintance with Frenchmen who have served I have never heard of aught but strict impartiality towards all faiths and towards unfaith as well.

Where religion and politics have intruded upon regimental life they have influenced only the corps of officers and only a small part of that. Before the Dreyfus Case crisis broke out the political Church had obtained some hold over the Army through the Headquarters Staff, where it counted many supporters. The public schools run by Jesuit and other fathers train boys for the military officers' schools, and, as is well known, retain great influence over their old boys in after-life. When the French State disestablished the Churches, the inventories of church property, ordered as much for the sake of the Church as for that of the State, led to a few disturbances, and, troops being called out to put down some of these, some officers threw up their commissions rather than command their men in such a juncture. So much for Church influence over the Army. Between whiles, in the reaction after the Dreyfus Case, the War Office became "anti-clerical" after being "clerical"; that is to say, the Headquarters Staff, the Church influence being thrown out, was run by anti-Church politicians. For a time a small party in the corps of officers, as bigoted against the Church as any Church party could be for it, tried to rule the Army politically; it was the time of the "fiches," secret reports drawn up about any officer who went to church, which were the violent retribution for the re-

porting under a previous rule of officers who did not go to church. This is the sum of the political influences with which the Republic has had to count in estimating her armed strength. They affect only the corps of officers, and only a small part of that. The men are untouched, for the obvious reason that they are an epitome of the nation, and that, what the nation wants, they must want: an anti-republican political move in the Army would prove that the nation had had enough of the Republic.

At the same time political influences in the Army, though small, are important. The Republic always has to remember two things regarding her Army: the lurking French fondness for an autocracy, naturally felt by a part of the corps of French officers, as the feeling is common to all military men in the world; the political power of the Roman Catholic Church, which through its schools influences the Army and which would, whenever it could, use that power against the secular State. The French State has a mighty weapon in its Army; it must always guard against that weapon being used against itself. But the Republic which is to-day the French State just keeps an eye open; the Army is loyal to the Republic. I for one have not met a French officer whom I durst ask whether he would remain loyal to the Republic without insulting him. Paul Déroulède, a great-hearted patriot with little sense, tried to lead on General Roget at the head of his brigade after the funeral of Félix Faure to capture the presidential palace of the Élysée, and the general



rode on to barracks, where he had Déroulède at last arrested. If there ever came an upheaval in France and a return to autocracy, which is the natural medium for all who seek adventures in arms, not an officer, I believe, but would gallantly and most disinterestedly stand up for the Republic. What the rank and file did the issue would show, the Army being the nation.

Within the memory of living Frenchmen, the military burthen of the nation has increased from seven years' service with purchase of substitutes, five and three years with exemptions and with one year service for college students, to two, then three year, service for all able-bodied men without any exceptions whatever. The 1913 law, instituting compulsory and strictly universal military service for three years (in practice thirty months), marks probably the limit of French military strength. Two years and a half out of the first manhood of all her youth, ploughman, artisan, student, artist, perhaps is the top price it is really worth a country's while to pay for military power. Will it ever pay France to make yet greater sacrifices for the sake of numbers in the field, if the numerical superiority of Germany increases ? The burthen of the thirty months' service, as it is, will weigh more heavily than is yet perceived. German observers, to my knowledge, looked forward to a decline in the level of French national education : in Germany the university student served one year in the army, as the French student did before the two years' service was instituted ; in France the student at twenty must interrupt

his studies for at least two and a half years, returning to the University after that to take his degree.

At present the burthen for France is unavoidable. Can it ever be altered? The Socialist party believes, or professes to believe, in a national militia on the Swiss plan: each man his own rifle, a first period of military service of a few months, yearly practice of a week or so afterwards. Every military student perceives at once that by the time such a militia had been mobilised a great well-organised standing Army like the German would have invaded half France. The French must go on bearing their burthen. The burthen is a life and death duty for France in case of conflict; in times of peace it is not solely a burthen. A year or two's military service does every boy good; I have tried to show that, in France, military service brings men, classes, and the nation together, is national, democratic, and human.

## CHAPTER XI

### ARMS : IN WAR

THE chapter on French arms in peace was written early in 1914, when the European War seemed less probable than it had seemed in 1911 and 1909. I left the chapter unchanged. French arms in war kept what they promised in peace, and kept more than their promise.

A nation to arms : has it ever been such a reality ? French military service in peace was national, democratic, and human. The best friends of France, among whom I count myself, never hoped that it would stand the test of war so well. The order of mobilisation found not a man in a thousand even lazy, and the whole nation took arms, as on paper it was meant to do ; but had the paper ever been tested before, and has any such national army existed before in history ? Every man took his post, every man put on his uniform, and with his civilian clothes shed utterly whatever his civilian life had been. I feel I must hammer the notion of democratic military service into the minds of those who do not know what it is.

The order of general mobilisation is posted up. My friend the First Secretary of Embassy, both

the perfectly modern diplomatist and a courtly gentleman of an ancient French family, is *ipso facto* a sergeant of artillery; his young subordinate, the same pleasant type of man, is sergeant-major; a third diplomatist joins us who is clamping about in the Quai d'Orsay rooms testing his regimental boots; he is a private. Downstairs, in the lobby, my different friend, the chief footman, tells me his son has just been gazetted a sub-lieutenant, having come out of Saint-Cyr military school—in the Line, “the Cavalry would not have been quite our set,” says the father. My friend the chief footman's son may very possibly have under his orders my friends the Secretaries of Embassy. If other friends of mine, Ministers Plenipotentiary and Ambassadors, were young enough, they might well be under his orders too. At the café, my friend the head waiter goes to-morrow as a private, and the second head waiter as a captain. It would have surprised any Frenchman on August 2, 1914, to learn that this could surprise any one. My friend the First Secretary of Embassy went through all the first battles of the war, from Alsace to Charleroi, from the Marne to Ypres, with gallantry, and the whole Quai d'Orsay is proud that he was promoted first to sergeant-major, then to sub-lieutenant on the battle-field, thus being now the equal of the chief footman's son.

Writing from among the French nation in arms, I can scarcely make it understood how natural these things are to them. I shall never forget the joy with which the Secretary of



Embassy told me he would start as a sergeant on a horse pulling a 75 mm. gun. The nation is in arms, everything else disappears with a completeness which no one outside can really grasp. A late Minister of War is a sub-lieutenant in a trench, and prouder than of anything else in his career to be promoted lieutenant. A millionaire banker on a motor bicycle runs errands for his sergeant, a bricklayer. Two troopers are in a trench on Christmas Eve and one says, "A year ago I was supping at the Café de Paris." "I know, I was the runner who fetched your motor-car, old chap."

For these French soldiers fighting are not democratic and brothers on principle and by rule. They feel it. The Third French Republic's army in the great war realised the perfect brotherhood of arms. From all that soldiers of all countries have told me, I do not think that in any other fighting force it is quite so true that "a man's a man for a' that." There is a story of the U.S. Navy, in peace time. A lieutenant, given an order, did exactly the contrary and came out on top. "Smart young chap," was all his commander said. In the British Navy he would have been court-martialled first of all. Discipline in the long run probably answers best, but there was something human in that American commander. The least human seems to be the German officer towards his men. German officers taken prisoners by the French have, in innumerable cases, bullied and struck their own fellow countrymen, fellow soldiers, and fellow prisoners, who were mere privates. I saw many

examples in French hospitals and prisoners' camps. Here is just one. To a French hospital where French and German officers and soldiers were cared for, an unexpected batch of wounded German soldiers was brought at night. The wards were fairly full, the officers had rooms to themselves. The old French surgeon-major sent round to say, "Would Messrs. the officers kindly be moved from their rooms to allow the fresh wounded to be provided for." "Why, of course," said the French officers, and went or were carried to other wards where soldiers lay. The German officers (wounded prisoners cared for by their captors) refused insolently to make way for mere German privates, and had to be removed by force. German officers taken prisoners and put in third class railway carriages, sometimes, it may be confessed, with glee by their captors, still hectored it over the wretched German private (often glad himself to be a prisoner) and frequently struck him. At railway buffets, eye-glass in eye, they clamoured for champagne. Hearing which, a Turco tied one up, put his trooper's saucepan on his head and thus drove him. In the whole war, not a single example of human devotion from a German private to his officer has been recorded, even officially in Germany. Perfect iron discipline, which is very useful; not a trace of give-and-take human discipline, which is useful also.

The British officer tries to be, and is, a disciplinarian, but he could not be a German officer if he tried. Imagine him, because he is an officer, refusing a bed to a wounded Tommy. But

Tommy, because he is a Tommy, remains Tommy to the officer. In khaki one can hardly tell the Commander-in-Chief from Private Atkins. One must wait to hear them talk, and then a gulf divides Tommy from his officers, a social gulf, the widest social gulf in England. The gulf narrows as the British Army increases, but it is not closed yet. Every one enlisted, and Tommy was occasionally Sir Thomas Blank, Bart., but Tommy remained in his quiddity. Not this war, nor any of the wars that will doubtless follow, will much change the British Tommy and his officer, both perfect and immutable, the one a frank, brave, simple, cheery soldier, the other a very gallant gentleman—and a bit of a snob.

The French officer at his best is both a leader and a comrade. The Prussian Junker is a born commander, with the instinct of authority in the blood; at his best, he treats his men as a hard but just master treats his servants, and in his eyes a private of the Landsturm, who was a lawyer or a professor in civilian life, is exactly one unit in the herd of which he is the autocrat, nothing more. The British officer is used to command, with the natural pull of the gently over the roughly nurtured man, and he commands like a gentleman, making at his best, friends, and devoted friends, of his men; but always humble friends, always with something akin to his pet fox terrier or brindled bull about them. Between the French officer who has authority and the French trooper who intelligently accepts authority there is a comradeship from man to man. The officer with no

real leadership in him who would have tried to lead would have come to disaster at the French front; there bluff and bullying were no good. The officer who had authority and had nothing else jeopardised his men. What the French Army did was done by officers and men who understood each other as officers and men seldom have. Blind obedience is not to be had of French troops. One wonders that it is to be had of any conscript troops, in which the sergeant may be by education his officer's master. No French officer could have hoped to send his men in serried ranks singing to slaughter, as German commanders did on the banks of the Yser. French officers, indeed, would not have had the heart to do it; French troops would not have had the blind courage to go. The French died as gallantly as any, but they had to know something of the reason why. Discipline did not fail—or would they have done what they did? But it was, one may say, a reasoned discipline, reasoned like everything French.

This was the French trooper, the best, the typical French trooper: a mechanic, say, or an artisan, aged twenty-five or thirty, seasoned by his three years' military service five or ten years before, seasoned also by shrewd living and deft practice of his handicraft; he was called up on August 1 and he came; he was perhaps an anti-militarist or merely a Pacifist Socialist before, but he came; his country was attacked and he came, and none readier to smash the Boches than he; all his wits spent on politics and his business before, now intent on his country's



cause ; he came, and, having reported himself, looked at his commanding officer. The officer had passed ten years in a military school, the Staff College and garrisons, in the tedious peace life of a professional soldier, and here he was, commanding men called up to war from their trades to fight now, to-morrow, perhaps to-day.

To fight for their country, of course, all knew that ; but how ? If the trooper looked at his officer, the officer looked at the trooper. When they understood each other the steel of the French army was tempered. They understood each other for ever after. Mere discipline henceforth would have been absurd. The young lieutenant was the father of his men, five or ten years older than he. A sergeant, a corporal, could command the devotion of the men in his trench. Men acknowledged chieftainship with their eyes open, and, having accepted, obeyed to the death. Where this freely consented comradeship of leaders and led was not, disaster came. If it had not prevailed, the battle of the Marne could not have been won, and France might have been lost. When General Joffre said, "Now is the time to stand and die rather than yield," it was the comradeship of French arms that stood and won. What made that stupendous retrieval was, above all, the French soldier ready to die for his friend, his officer. A lieutenant, slightly wounded, was carried to the field hospital. He found there a severely wounded trooper, and spent all his time caring for him. "Your brother ?" asked the chief surgeon. "No, my orderly servant." That is what, among other

things, won for the Allies the battle of the Marne.

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The battle of the Marne saved Paris and France. It was improvised. All the war was improvised by France. All she did in the war was impromptu except her mobilisation. Fighting France kept more than all her promises. French military organisation kept scarcely more than one: it was caught without sufficient heavy artillery, without anything like adequate provision in motor transport, without proper fortifications in the right places, without the shadow of a plan of strategic defence against the particular attack the enemy made. French mobilisation almost alone succeeded of all the French Army's prearranged plans. That worked extraordinarily well, so well that one could hardly believe it. German papers had humorous descriptions of the *piou-piou* waiting in Rennes, where he found his red trousers, while his tunic was being sent him from Bordeaux, his boots from Lyons, his rifle from Paris, his cartridges from Marseilles. This was only the gay German fancy. French mobilisation worked as smoothly as the best machine made in Germany. Frenchmen themselves wondered at it. From the midnight of Saturday, August 1, the machine moved without a hitch till all fighting France was mobilised. Scores of friends of mine, officers either on active service or retired, checked it minutely and none found a mistake. One travelled up and down, watch in hand, on a

railway line which he knew well, having in his youth prepared the mobilisation plans for that line: each troop train passed a given point at the exact time it had been scheduled to pass in the plans drawn up years before. Another had built a strategic railway line to be used only for mobilisation: the troop trains followed to the second the time-table he had drawn up for the line, that had scarcely ever been used before.

The French railways (every railway servant mobilised instantly and turned into a soldier by a badge on his arm, though kept in his ordinary post) bettered all the hopes the Headquarters Staff or any one else had of them; no fuss, no rush, not a hitch, it was the perfectly oiled machine. No trains *de luxe* ever ran as accurately as the troop trains bringing a million men to the frontier in a fortnight. It was a surprise to most Frenchmen and to all tourists. While we had for years been rushing haphazard in quick but spasmodic French *rapide* trains, a careful schedule of innumerable steady, punctual troop-trains for war had been drawn up "for the day"; and when the day came the schedule was acted upon with a machine-like regularity our best Riviera or Rome Expresses never knew. The trains took the men, and they, on arrival, found uniforms, boots, knapsacks, rifles, cartridges, ready for each one; the trains took them on again, this time to the front. The "not a gaiter-button missing" of Marshal Lebœuf in 1870 really was in 1914 the truth, and not a word of brag about it. The obscure officers who for years planned, each for his humble part of

clerk or accountant, the mobilisation of the Third French Republic's army and its transport by railway, without a word of praise then and without a word of recognition afterwards, deserved well of their country.

This French success in organisation surprised France herself. It was exactly what every one, and she too, had expected she would fail in. Luckily for her, she did not; it would have been all up with her if she had. As it was, she was completely out-manceuvred and out-witted during the first month of the campaign by superior German strength and preparedness; had there been one hitch in her mobilisation, even her unconquerable spirit could not have made miracles, and the astounding rally of the defending armies against the invaders would have been impossible.

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The campaign from the middle of August to the middle of September 1914, from Charleroi to the Marne, will be remembered in military history as one of the most dramatic, in its swiftness and the suddenness of its rightabouts, ever recorded. The extreme French right, composed of half the best French troops, uselessly and prematurely attacked in Alsace, which the German advance ignored. The French centre, the remainder of the best French active army, was on the right bank of the Meuse, almost unoccupied. The French left, reserves just taken from shops and counting-houses, was not yet in touch with the then small British army just



landed from England. The strength and flower of the German army, eighteen Army Corps or so, having taken Liège, and burnt Louvain by the way, bore down on the left bank of the Meuse. The French left centre rashly attacked at Charleroi.<sup>1</sup> The British forces, just landed, were attacked and almost surrounded in the neighbourhood of Mons. Charleroi and Mons were severe defeats for the Allies, and richly deserved ; their tactics there were madness. The best strength of the German Army bore on irresistibly, enveloping the French left, the best French troops were still in the centre and on the right, scarcely occupied, the British troops were the flower of the British Army, but outnumbered by at least five to one. The retreat of the Allies from Mons and Charleroi was a run. The German right bore on, marching thirty to thirty-five miles a day. The Allies' left retreated, of course faster still. Rearguard fighting went on incessantly, but there was no time for pitched battles ; the Allies' retreat and the German advance were too rapid. Imagine what it was, this scamper of about half a million men, pivoting on the French centre or probably the right of the French centre, down from Belgium to south of the Marne, with three-quarters of a million German troops, sturdy, flushed with victory, full of perfect confidence, in pursuit.

<sup>1</sup> M. Messimy, then Minister of War, insisted upon the attack, as a "demonstration" in support of Belgium, and a "demonstration" was all it was, but a bloody one and all but fatal. Lord Kitchener then pressed upon the French Government the advisability of M. Messimy's retiring, which he did to join the Army as an officer of modest rank, M. Millerand succeeding him.

The mass of the German right wing was scarcely twenty miles from Paris<sup>1</sup> on September 3. The whole French line from Verdun fortress to Belgium had been swept back, and moreover driven in towards and east of Paris; the line thus first pivoted like the spoke of a wheel upon Verdun as the axle, then the spoke itself gave way and was bent in, crumpled into an irregular curve, the right extremity still at Verdun, the left some twenty miles north-west of Paris. The line was bent in south-east of Paris as far as fifty miles, to where the British forces had retired from the left of the line. Paris was to be encompassed from the south-east as well as from the north. The German army attacking fitted the bent—it seemed a broken—line all along, from the Crown Prince's army at the German left to that of General von Kluck at the extreme right. German command of the field seemed indisputable, and Paris a certain prey.

Paris was undefended. Paris could not then have been defended. Not a fort round Paris could have withstood heavy artillery for a day. Not a trench had been dug, not a gun placed in soft earthworks, which alone can hold against modern heavy artillery. On September 1 nothing whatever had been done to prepare the defence of Paris on modern plans—earthworks, trenches, hidden batteries, barbed wire. By October Paris, by all the best approved modern means,

<sup>1</sup> The nearest point to Paris reached by the German advance-guard was Gonesse, about eight miles north-east of the boundary of the capital, on September 3rd.

had been made impregnable, and trenches and barbed wire and earthworks stretched for fifty miles northwards. But the German army ought to have seized Paris before the middle of September if the German command had been equal to itself, and would have seized Paris undoubtedly but for the battle of the Marne.

The German right wing, instead of making on straight from Senlis through Gonesse to Paris, turned abruptly eastwards, still with forced marches (September 4 and 5). On September 6 General Joffre saw General French and ordered the attack all along the line, principally on the Allies' left, for the next day. On September 11 the whole German line had been driven back fifty miles. That was the battle of the Marne, called by General Joffre "indisputably a victory." What military miracle had happened ?

The German right wing within a few miles of Paris left Paris on its right to rush east and south in order firstly to cut off Paris and the railways on that side and secondly to support the Crown Prince, reported to be in some difficulty on the German left. When the German right wing had turned at right angles, a fresh French army (General Maunoury) appeared in its rear, *i.e.* on what was its right flank before the change of front<sup>4</sup> eastwards. The German right wing faced about, "by skilful and swift manœuvring," General Joffre himself recorded, and met the new French army. The result was that the German line was driven back only fifty miles, and, had the German right wing

parried less well, the retreat might have been then at once to the French frontier.

A wonderful series of moves in the bloody game of war. The mistakes of the Franco-British Allies in the beginning have been noted. When did General Joffre's definite purpose in retreat shape itself? The retreat at first from Charleroi was a forced retreat, just saved from a rout. Yet half-way in that retreat Joffre must have suddenly seen his plan. After the first three or four days of running, his generals, and General French, sent messages "We can hold"; Joffre said "Retire." To one of his generals' urgent appeals, "*I am* holding the enemy, let me attack," Joffre said, "Hold twenty-four hours if you like, then retire again." On Saturday September 6, Joffre saw French and said, "Let us attack to-morrow, Sunday morning."

Half-way during that almost despairing retreat from Charleroi, Joffre, who certainly never despaired, saw his plan, which was this. "The pursuing Germans are confident, over-confident perhaps; bold and sure of themselves, perhaps over-bold and cocksure. They think they have us on toast; have they? We have had rear-guard actions, they have never seriously gone for us since Charleroi, they have only pursued while we fled. They think us beaten and hardly worth fighting any more; they think only of their advance, which is certainly a feat, not of us as any more a hindrance. But are we beaten? Let me try my men. I will say, 'Stand, stand to the last man,' and see what happens. I hope,



and hope greatly. If my hope fails all will be over, and I will tell them so. I put my trust in Providence and my men who have retreated from Charleroi—and I will keep a card up my sleeve if I can. The enemy calls us beaten. I hope and think we are not. If we are not he will be surprised; I will try another surprise. Our standing up to him at the last, outside Paris, will be one; a fresh army meeting him then will be another. While we get together a new army will he learn of it by scouts and aeroplanes before we have formed it? Possibly, but the ghost of a chance is worth trying."

Just that chance *was* Joffre's. There may be no other definition of a great general. The triumphant German army did despise its adversary, and was flushed with victory, and also wine, from Champagne. It did rush on heedlessly and it did not think of looking out for anything new on its right: there it thought all possible resistance crushed. General Maunoury's new army struck the blow; the German right turned to meet it; the French armies that had retreated from Charleroi realised what Joffre hoped, and attacked; General Foch, for one, telegraphed to Joffre, "I am driven in on my right and on my left, therefore I am attacking in my centre," and did so.

Two discoveries mere made by the German army: the retreating Allies not only had fight enough left in them to turn and attack suddenly, but had enough wit left also to spring a surprise.

Several military blunders cost the German Army the battle of the Marne. The first (but the latest in date) and the most obvious was the failure to detect the formation of a new French army on the German right. This was an unpardonable and scarcely comprehensible failure. General Maunoury's army was got together in exactly forty-eight hours just outside Paris. It consisted mainly of fresh troops from Colonial Corps arrived from Africa, but also of troops brought back from the actual fighting line. The army was brought together by rail and by 5,000 taxicabs, General Galliéni, formerly of Madagascar, appointed Military Governor of Paris in September 1914, being organiser. Apparently, certainly indeed, the German command knew nothing of this. Yet at that precise time German Tauben were flying over Paris dropping bombs, killing and maiming women and children, and might have found out French military preparations. On September 3, a Taube day in Paris, General von Kluck, commanding the German right, knew nothing of General Maunoury's army.

The second German blunder was the psychological one of not understanding the adversary. From Charleroi on, German officers and men said to the French, "Why fight? You are beaten. You are not soldiers. We are. Why go on? Let us make peace." And eighteen German Army Corps marched on superbly, in admirable order, admirably organised, a perfect fighting machine.

They went on, and committed the third

German blunder, much akin to the second. This was to ignore the adversary's military plan. The whole campaign to the battle of the Marne proved this German persuasion; the foe does not count, only our plan for fighting the foe counts. It was characteristic of the whole German strategy in the campaign of 1914 in France that the German command never assumed its adversary to have a plan or any ideas at all. Napoleon's battle genius lay in seizing instantly every chance any blunder of the enemy gave him. The modern German General Staff seemed to have laid down the axiom that, as it always intended to be the attacking party, its plan of attack alone mattered and nothing was to be gained from any watching of the enemy's defence. The crushing rush into France through Belgium and down the left bank of the Meuse was the classic, long-planned German attack, and it succeeded up to a few miles of Paris. But the German command never seized the chances of the moment as they came; the invasion marched imperturbably and blindly on, following the long prearranged plan, not following up any of the successes won. Many French officers told me that, if a Napoleon had then been the German commander, the retreating Allies would have been crushed. He would have struck home repeatedly, and the retreating armies could not have held. As it was, after Charleroi, the advancing Germans merely advanced, almost ignored their adversaries, never attacked them with any persistence. "Had they resolutely forced fights with us as we re-

tired," said a French general, "we would have been routed."

They just went marching on Paris-wards, ignoring the adversary, blind to the supreme chances their own successes gave them, and they gave the adversary time to organise a masterly retreat, at the end of which the armies beaten on the Belgian frontier were re-formed, re-made, and could turn and face them, not only not demoralised, but tempered and strengthened and ready, as the French Commander-in-Chief told them they must, to stand to the death. The Germans still came gaily on, looting and drinking and murdering non-combatants by the way, and apparently persuaded that the adversary they had driven before them had melted into nothing. That the pursued armies turned round and stood and fought ten times better than at Charleroi, that a new French army came out on the German right flank, that there was any fight left or that there were any fresh troops left in the Allies' armies, was, I imagine, the greatest surprise the German General Staff ever had. Unsurpassed preparation for conquest by force of arms achieved by the German people was stultified by the German people's utter inability to know the mind of other peoples. German military strength was a formidable monster wrapt in self-contemplation.

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The stupendous German battle for Calais, lasting over two months, a bloodier fight even than Charleroi or the Marne, was another proof



of German strength and German stupidity. Think what General French's and General Joffre's position was : armies exhausted by defeat first and terribly won victory afterwards, just enough in numbers to keep the lines, no reserves to be had. The enemy had at least eight Army Corps massed in Belgium perfectly fresh, that had never seen fighting and were spoiling for it. The road to Calais was open, Lille and Maubeuge were German, nothing could have stopped a good German general. The Germans sat down and slowly concentrated their best new troops. Joffre and French knew naturally what was coming and raced to the sea. What a race it was ! Here a worn-out French regiment kept the line for twenty-four hours, till a little less fagged regiment could be brought up. There old territorials showed a bold front whilst other troops were rushed up behind them northwards. Step by step, by smart use of rail and motor, troops were taken up, one movement masking another, and it was the Allies who got to the sea first. The Germans, as usual, had affected to ignore the adversary. They had solemnly massed their completely fresh army corps, some of their best troops, composed of university young men, and when the troops were concentrated, but only then, they attacked the Yser for Calais. Unfortunately for them, the Allies had by then got there first. The slaughter of the flower of German youth on that Yser canal is already history, presumably even in Germany. It is a mistake to think German military leadership masterly ; it is astute, it is not intelligent.

With half a Napoleon to lead them the Germans could have taken Calais in September 1914.

In 1916, with the most furious, desperate, and mightiest blows ever known in military history, they could not take Verdun. There was no manœuvring there. It was just a battering-ram that found a wall against which it battered in vain. It was the Germans' old denseness that never understands their neighbour. The French soldiers they attacked were wolves at bay. Every Frenchman fighting for Verdun had given up his life already, and then thought no more about it. This really was France fighting for her life, and simply preferring to die than to yield. It was no use trying to frighten her or work upon her nerves then. Every officer and man I saw round Verdun was quite simply ready to die the next moment. One could not have spoken the word "heroism" to them, they would have shuddered at the tactlessness of it. They were just doing their soldiers' job. "We won't let the Boches through," was all they said—and they didn't. The Germans never could have taken Verdun, least of all when they tried.

The Army of the Third French Republic proved that the Frenchman has all the old fight in him. The French soldier of to-day is as brave as his forbear of the First Empire or the First Revolution. The Third French Republic proved that a democracy, opposed to militarism, bent on social ideals and often distraught among a dozen different ones, absorbed in a surface whirl of politics and usually divided against itself, could nevertheless, while pursuing at the

same time a hundred other heterogeneous objects, build up a military strength that could at all events stand up to that of an autocratic Empire which had centred all its energies upon acquiring military strength.

The Republic did not provide enough heavy artillery, did not fortify adequately northern towns like Maubeuge, did not manufacture ammunition enough, did not thoroughly prepare war. She paid the penalty: devastation of north-eastern France and unspeakable outrages by a methodically savage enemy. But the Republic saved France all the same. In the midst of unpreparedness, she was the French *débrouillard* wit that, like the English, "muddles through." The Republic was the real France, plucky, resourceful, quick. No other Government, Empire or Monarchy, was in history more the real France. The Republic's armies fought for the French Republic, and did not think of the Republic and of France apart. General Joffre was an Atheist Radical Republican, and General Marquis de Curières de Castelnau a Royalist Roman Catholic—nothing of that mattered. Only France mattered. There were no French home intrigues about the war of 1914. The French nation in arms fought, every man, for France, not for a party. What defeat might have brought I do not know, but no change could arise out of victory. The French Army, which was the French nation, remained absolutely loyal to the Republic. French democracy came out of the struggle not weakened, but strengthened.

## CHAPTER XII

### CHURCHES

THE Churches and the French spirit, the Churches and the French State, the Churches and the French people : religious questions in the France of to-day may thus be roughly summed up. The hold of the Churches upon the French spirit has seldom been mystical. Religion outside the Churches has seldom had much hold upon the French spirit. The great religious movements of modern Europe have not sprung from France. The Huguenots were and remain a small minority in the nation. The Jansenists, almost the only French religious mystics for centuries, hovered perilously near heresy and were stamped out. They were Roman Catholic Puritans, and the French spirit asks for a human religion.

The French spirit, being above all human, wants a human religion, not a transcendental, superhuman, or inhuman religion, but a religion that makes allowances and allows compromises, an accommodating religion ; a perhaps not deeply religious religion. The want comes not from hypocrisy but from sincerity. It is the Anglo-Saxon religious spirit that is trying to fly anywhere out of the world, and trying to believe that it can and does. The French spirit cannot



forget that it inhabits a frame with feet of clay. It calls a religion sincere that says the flesh is weak; the other religious spirit calls condoning hypocritical: which is the more sincere? The French spirit is certainly sincere. It posits humanity first of all, and assumes that religion shall not be a way out of humanity but shall make the best of humanity. It wants a workable religion; hence no religion has had or has as much hold over the French nation as the Roman Catholic. Carrying on the same reasons, the French spirit prefers an organised, politic, and tried religion. If you need a religion, there is no point in rebellion; if you are a rebel, leave all religions. It is a fact of great importance for the knowledge of the French nation that religious sects have within it never flourished and scarcely ever even existed. Thousands thrive in Anglo-Saxondom; the Salvation Army, since its beginning, has doggedly and fruitlessly tried to implant itself in French life. Rome satisfies French seekers after religion, who seek a human religion, who do not break away because they seek, but on the contrary look for a rule.

French thought has sapped the Churches perhaps more than any other, but almost always from purely human reasons. Voltaire is the type of purely human foes of all Churches. French thought has not attacked established revealed religions on their own ground, has not set up other religions against them. French metaphysics from Descartes to Professor Boutroux have been compatible with Christian dogma:

no mysticism clashing with the taught mysteries of the Church of Rome. Comte alone of French philosophers set up a new religion, and that was the religion of humanity, and he was by his own definition no metaphysician; anyhow, his Positivism is dead. Modern French philosophy for half a century or more was a milk-and-water idealism, with Victor Cousin, Paul Janet, severely eschewing mysticism. After Lachelier and Ravaisson, Professor Boutroux (to recall the one shrewd remark of the novelist M. Paul Bourget on receiving him into the French Academy) in his treatise on the Contingency of Natural Laws supplied the one argument for idealism which for fifty years in French philosophy a weak idealism had in vain been looking for. Still not a tinge of mysticism in this idealism. Professor Bergson, undermining the intellectual conception of the universe, might have set rolling a wave of mysticism and did not. The French spirit is human and sceptical or human and religious, unless it be all three—human, sceptical and religious, as in Renan. If religious, Rome satisfies it, not with the cheap sensuousness of incense, still less with the tawdry trappings of the worst modern ecclesiastical art, as seen at Lourdes, but with wise humanity and politic knowledge of the world. To find sweeping waves of inhuman religiousness one must go to Anglo-Saxondom or to Slavism, to the Puritans and to the Dukhobors.

The problem of the relations of Church and State has, especially in modern times, been the most acute religious question before the French

nation precisely because the French spirit preferred to consider a human, politic, social, and organised faith. Had the French spirit looked upon religion from a standpoint more detached from human affairs, political contacts, clashings and connexions between Church and State would have been less prominent in French history. The English people, for example, after many religious quarrels, faces no great Church and State conflict to-day, not merely because the very well established Anglican Church is still inexpugnable, but also, and principally, because the English religious spirit has found outlets in many streams of belief that led freely and undiverted not to humanly constructive systems of faith, but often indeed away from human affairs. The American people knows no Church and State antagonism because its Churches are free, but these are free precisely because they are not great politic human systems, because they are many, and because each leads away from, rather than to, problems of social construction. In both peoples a tendency to combine religious and human affairs would have produced Church and State conflicts. The Anglo-Saxon spirit lets itself loose on religion, and keeps the practical business of society and Government separate. The French spirit makes a human, social, and political business of religion.

The modern history of the Roman Catholic Church in France has always been political, or at least has never been divorced from political action : the modern history of the Church has

always been more or less the history of Church and State. The relations between the two have been various and complex; they have always been close. It suited the French spirit to hold the Church to be as much a body politic as a spiritual force; the French State never had a different conception of the function of the Church, and the Church herself did not conceive her function otherwise. In the relations between Church and State there have been alliance and antagonism, and various forms of both. Church and State have fought each other and used each other, and conflicts and manœuvring have been diverse and complicated. The old Monarchy was often in conflict with Rome; the Church sometimes stood for Rome against the State, sometimes used the State against Rome.

The "Gallican" movement in the French Church at times was strong, and it might have happened that a Gallican Catholic Church had been founded, owing no doubt allegiance to Rome, yet not directly depending upon Rome. "Ultramontanes" fought "Gallicans," and were alternately allied with and arrayed against the French State, as the latter was for or against Rome, and threw over or used the Gallicans. The Archbishop of Paris might have become the head of a Gallican Church; in the same, but contrary way, it is a mere accident of history that the Anglican Church is not to-day the English branch of the Church of Rome, with the Archbishop of Canterbury as its Primate and the Vicar in England of the Vicar of St. Peter at Rome. The French State, from the Old



Monarchy to almost to-day, alternately used and dropped the nascent Gallican Church. The latter, now completely dead, might be powerful to-day, had the State pursued a constant policy towards it. Napoleon I, whose policy was the most drastic of all State policies towards the Church, and who captured the Pope, drew up the Concordat with Rome which established the Roman Catholic Church in France and which lasted a century. He might have established a Gallican Church, and the consequences might have been very different for Church and for State.

That Concordat was revoked by the Third Republic in 1905-1907. An intricate story of political connexions and interactions between Church and State which I must try to sum up in a page leads to that denunciation of contract which was the most thorough, swift, quiet, and successful revolution accomplished by any nation in modern times. That the Church in France is a body politic must always be remembered. Its relations with the Third Republic varied. Under the Third Republic the State has been usually but not constantly hostile to the Church, the Church has not been constantly hostile to the State, but when friendly has tried to use the State; the State never tried to use the Church, which was its mistake. Anti-clericalism in the State, Anti-Republicanism in the Church, is a rough, serviceable generalisation. With Gambetta's "clericalism, there is the enemy" the Third Republic certainly started hostile to the Church, but it did not constantly remain so.

When the Third Republic was founded the Church undoubtedly and avowedly stood against the Republic, for a restoration of the Monarchy, or for a continuation of the Empire if that had been thinkable. This may not have been the Church of the country, the church of village priest and peasant parishioner, probably was not; but it was the political Church, the Church with all the wire-pulling in her hand.

The anti-clericalism of the Third Republic has seemed to outsiders unfair and harsh: the shutting up church schools, disbanding of religious orders, removal of nuns from the hospitals. Countries where all religious schools and religious orders live freely called such measures bigotry; they were countries in which there may or may not be Church and State conflicts, but in which, if there be, the Church is not the Roman Catholic Church. England, for instance, with her firmly established Church, has her own problems of Churches and State, but none like that of France, whose contemporary problem has been that of conflict between the Government the new France had chosen and the century-old Church. The Third Republic did not always fight the Church, but sometimes showed the olive branch, if not very intelligently.

Two periods can be marked out in the relations of Church and State under the Third Republic up to Disestablishment. The first was frankly Anti-Clericalism on one side and the Church versus the Republic on the other; the Church openly prayed and worked for the restoration of any form of Government that

would do away with the Republic. The second began (1894) with a phrase of a Republican minister, Spuller, "l'esprit nouveau": the phrase is remembered nearly a quarter of a century afterwards, and phrases that have stuck have often made revolutions, especially in France. This one did not make a revolution, but nearly did. It meant reconciliation between the Republic and the Church of Rome. Almost simultaneously (1890) Pope Leo XIII had taken the corresponding step and advised (it was a command, but not a formal one) French Roman Catholics to give up what Anti-Republican, Royalist, or Imperialist action they had pursued for the sake of the Church, and precisely for the sake of the Church to "rally round the Republic."

It was the most interesting political and religious situation thinkable in France at the time. The Anti-Republican political parties were suddenly arrested by the papal command: half the Royalists and Imperialists suddenly became "Ralliés," as they were called. The Republic was suddenly offered the immense power of the Church as its support. The French Roman Catholic Church was suddenly given perhaps the greatest chance it has ever had; under the old Monarchy the attempts at an independent Gallican Church were made only under the King's wing and a Gallican Church could have established itself in power only with the throne backing it against Rome. When Leo XIII told French Catholics "Rally to the Republic," he gave an extraordinary chance

both to French Catholics and to the Republic. A very few French Churchmen saw it: the Gallican Church, accepting and supporting the Republic, might have been established.

The Republic of the “*esprit nouveau*” then seemed ready. The Church might have built up with the Republic a lasting political and religious organism, whereas to-day Church and State are divorced political bodies. The Republic also threw away, or more probably ignored, its chance. If few French churchmen saw that then was the time for a Gallican Church to be at last founded with the Republic, as few French statesmen saw that then, or never perhaps, the Republic could strengthen herself by the Church. Anti-clericalism suddenly ceased to be even “an article for home consumption only,” as Gambetta had called it. Voltaireanism remained a venerable and acceptable mental attitude, but no longer seemed to be practical politics. The great political and practical possibility caught sight of and for a little while contemplated was that of a combination of the Republican political system and the Church political system.

It would have been a fine piece of political joinery and might have turned out a masterpiece. The Church of Rome in France and the Republic in France united would have won for each other and together an impregnable position. The Church would have been established in the State more strongly than ever before in history; the Gallican Church would have had such authority and power for answering Rome in those thousand small arguments and differences



that arise yearly between Rome and her Churches in all countries as no Roman Catholic Church of any country has ever had before. The Republic for its own part, allied with the Church, would have brought all anti-Republican, Royalists, Bonapartists, any kind of Imperialists, at once to their knees. Many intelligent French observers, with whom I agree to a great extent, think that such an alliance, which would have been a big bold move for a big statesman to play and which might have altered modern history, was feasible. Anti-clericalism in the country had been almost solely political. The parish priest, left to himself, would have been quite content with the Republic; his parishioners were no enemies of his, when he did not canvass for Anti-Republican candidates. Some prelates of the Church of Rome in France, the great African missionary prelate, Cardinal Lavigerie, for one, saw no antinomy at all between the Republic and the Church; some French statesmen (they were fewer, and that perhaps was where the Republic failed then) saw no reverse contradiction between the Church and the Republic. Some prelates, of whom Cardinal Lavigerie was no doubt one, saw the chance for the Gallican Church in an alliance with the Republic; no great Republican statesman saw the equivalent opportunity for the Republic. The opportunity for both passed quickly. If fault there were, it was a fault on both sides. The Republic did not understand, the Church wouldn't understand.

The Dreyfus Case came, and after it the Dis-

establishment of the Churches in France. The Roman Catholic Church in France and the Republic in France had not understood how to help each other. The opportunity gone, the Republic made, as to-day, less use than ever of the Church. But the Church in the interval had used the brief opportunity wrongly and distorted the chance offered of co-operation between Church and State.

There is no doubt that in the main the Church of Rome in France used its influence against the Republic, and used precisely against the Republic the opportunity offered of co-operation with the Republic. In the few years preceding the Dreyfus Case the influence of the Church, "Anti-clericalism" waning, waxed enormously; it was not an influence loyally serving the Republic. Thus, when the Dreyfus Case broke out, the War Office was mostly peopled with servants of the Church: otherwise there probably would have been no Dreyfus Case. The Dreyfus War raged, and the Church plunged furiously into the fight. One churchman here and there kept his head, but the millions swamped him. The case for or against the Jew captain disappeared in the Dreyfusard and Anti-Dreyfusard war. If the Anti-Dreyfusards had won, the Republic would have been overthrown: that shows what the policy of the Church of Rome in France became. Rare churchmen here and there doubted the wisdom of that policy.

Divorce became unavoidable between the State and the Church of Rome, and between the State and the Churches, the two others, the

Jewish and the Reformed, established on exactly the same footing by Napoleon I as the Church of Rome, sharing helplessly the latter's fate. Church and State being regarded in their relations to one another, there was, both from the standpoint of the Church and from that of the State, as much to be said for as against disestablishment. For the Church the gain was independence in the State: no priest was a Government official any longer; no bishop could be censored for "abuse" of his mission, as under the statutes of the Concordat, with docking of his salary, on the ground of political action taken by him; the Church was free to take any political action and to side with any political party for, or more plausibly against, the Republic. On the other hand, the price to pay for independence in the State was for the Church in France eventually and inevitably greater dependence upon Rome: the dream of a Gallican Church was for ever shattered by disestablishment; the Church of Rome in France divorced from the State not only could not hope to stand by herself, but could stand only with ever stronger Roman support, and must by the force of circumstances be less and less a Gallican Church and more and more an alien Church in the country; severed from the State she was free of the State, but it might be dangerously free, for, if led to political action, perhaps driven by Rome thither, she was no longer under State control, but the State also was bound no longer and would hit back without mercy. The State, for its own part, was delivered by disestablish-

ment of the incubus of an acknowledged State within the State, and a State mainly hostile to the including State : no more State-supported priests and prelates, constantly to be watched and constantly working against the State ; no more vesting of authority by the Republic in priests who served secretly a restoration of the Monarchy or the Empire ; a complex and ambiguous problem of French politics was at once made clear and simple. But it was not solved because it was simplified. By disestablishing the Roman Catholic Church the French State threw away a weapon as well as a burthen ; it freed itself from, but also set free a formidable power ; all hopes of working with or making use of the Church went ; the destruction of the dream of a Gallican Church was as serious a thing for the State as for the Church.

While thinking men on both sides weighed these arguments, action on both sides made divorce inevitable. But in the long negotiations over the divorce the misgivings and hesitations of further-sighted politicians on both sides were reflected. The history of these negotiations was a remarkable example of the Vatican's good political judgment and of the political realism of the French Republic. The Republic's measure was twice rejected imperturbably by the Vatican, though the French Church accepted it. " Associations cultuelles " were to be formed to which each parish church was to be handed over ; French bishops accepted the associations ; the Vatican vetoed them absolutely. The Republic tried again, and the second measure was



framed, by which each parish priest obtained possession of his church from the State on making a legal declaration *ad hoc*. The French Church would have accepted that measure; it also was absolutely vetoed by the Vatican. The Republic made a third attempt and churches were simply left open by the State "for the practice of religion therein," and by that law Roman Catholic churches in France to-day are worshipped in exactly as before disestablishment.<sup>1</sup> Rome won, because Rome saw that the Republic in this must and would drop the old revolutionary formal logic and arrange a compromise. The shaping of the once anti-clerical and theoretical measure of Disestablishment by M. Briand to fit the facts of the day was the greatest sign of a new tendency in modern France to suit the old idealism of French politics to the old realism of French life.

The Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed Church and the Jewish Church, established in exactly the same legal status in France for a century, were, in the course of the political struggle between the first and the Republic, all three disestablished by the law of 1905, amended in 1907 to suit the Church of Rome. How do and will Church and State questions affect the relations of Churches and people? There were no Church and State questions between the French State and the Reformed and Jewish Churches. The two latter did and do exercise

<sup>1</sup> The upkeep and artistic repair of the great churches of France, classified as "historical monuments," had long been undertaken solely by the State.

definite political influence, but it was and is definite and circumscribed. It cannot spread : the Reformed Church in France makes no converts from Roman Catholicism. It could not come into conflict with the State : Jew and Protestant politicians and statesmen enjoyed their full share of power, and generally employed it against the Roman Catholic Church, but they formed two definite and homogeneous circles of political influence, which could not widen, just as in religion Jews and French Protestants make no proselytes, and which obviously could not be a menace to the State. The Roman Catholic Church charged the Synagogue and the French Reformed Church with abetting the State against her : to some extent they did, but it was scarcely surprising that they should, for they were the pigmies and Rome the giant.

Yet Rome could not prevent disestablishment in France. But did Rome honestly want to prevent disestablishment ? As a matter of principle, yes ; it is part of the admirably coherent and continuous policy of Rome to hold that the Church of Rome should by right be the State Church in every nation of the world. As for expediency, Rome did nothing to prevent disestablishment in France ; it might not have been avoidable, but the political action of the Church seemed almost to be asking for it. When it came, Rome deliberately forced the State, by rejecting all compromises successively, to separate the Church from itself more completely than it had ever intended. A principle, of course, was at stake, that of the supremacy of

spiritual authority, which might have been threatened by the forming of partly lay "associations" for receiving from the State the charge of the State-owned churches, but principles can be accommodated when necessary to further-reaching policies. Rome would have preserved connexions with the French State in spite of principles, as churchmen and religious laymen—like the "green Cardinals," so called because they were religious laymen most of whom could don the Academician's uniform with green palm leaves—advised, if that had been her policy. She made the bolder move, and chose to have for the first time in French Christian history her Church in France bound by not one single tie to the State of the ancient Catholic country, not even by a priest's mere declaration of occupation of a place of worship. Was Rome right or wrong? Rome is generally right. The State was hostile, the Church could not capture the State; better, then, to cut all connexion with the State.

The future will show whether the Church has lost in France by disestablishment, promoted by the State and pursued by the Church herself, or has gained by it. Among the losses is that of the priest's position and prestige as one holding authority from the State—a serious loss in France: M. le Curé is but one of ourselves now; the *garde champêtre* is better than he, holding authority from the powers that be. Among the gains is that of the independence of the higher clergy; Monseigneur snaps his fingers now at the Prefect, becomes, where he sees his chance,

a great political personage, a fount of political influence, a head of political power, and neither Prefect, nor Minister, nor Parliament can even say a word, who in the old days of Napoleon's Concordat could silence him, suspend, and dismiss him. The Church party since the Republic has never commanded at parliamentary elections more than an inadequate representative minority; if it should ever command, not a majority, but even a bare half of the constituencies, the political freedom due to disestablishment will give it remarkable power, perhaps with startling results. The French State does not seem to have thought of that not probable but possible chance. So far Rome seems to have been justified in enforcing, after protests, disestablishment. The Church among the people has hitherto not lost and perhaps gained.

In society, in the fashionable world, in the solid bourgeoisie, the influence of the Church increased immediately after disestablishment. Anti-clericalism was more hopelessly "bad form" than ever. The ministrations of the Church at marriage, birth, and death were more than ever required: only the religious wedding was of any account, the civil ceremony was held ridiculous and vulgar and treated as uncereemoniously as possible; the woman married only by the mayor and not by the Church was considered to be a concubine, the divorced woman married again, naturally not by the Church, was living in adultery; not to christen children and to bury the dead unprayed for was a social scandal.



By disestablishing the Church, the State increased the social prestige of the Church tenfold : congregations were more numerous and edifying than ever before ; men took to going to mass regularly with their womenfolk ; students openly, sometimes ostentatiously, professed in large bodies complete obedience to the Church ; piety, in school as well as in drawing-room, was creditable. The Church banned a fashionable dance and it instantly became vulgar, put an author on the Index Expurgatorius and society no longer read him. A French moderate Republican salon of the beginning of the twentieth century would have been shocked by the free thought of an eighteenth century salon of soon-to-be " heretofores " and guillotined. Nor was the instant revival of church influence at disestablishment only an empty and small fashion ; it spread throughout the soberest bourgeoisie, slowest to nibble at fashions, and it was anything but barren, for it not only compensated the Church at once for the loss of state stipends to the clergy, but brought in, through funds regularly administered by organised associations of laymen generally under ecclesiastical guidance, more money than the Church had ever got from State and voluntary contributions combined. The dispersal of the regular orders did not affect the influence of the Church among the owning classes. The secular clergy observed the emigration of their regular rivals with no chagrin, the competition between the two being an ancient quarrel in the Church and in all Roman Catholic countries, and the

former having often in past history sought the support of Crown and State against the latter.

Among earners and among the peasantry the Church has not gained, but it has not yet perceptibly lost, influence by being no longer the State Church. Upon the former its hold had long been small; it was fragmentary and adventitious, it depended chiefly upon the power and influence of great labour employers, masterful or winning or both, working for the Church, or perhaps upon the spell of a great priest here and there, a born shepherd that always finds a flock. It had not for long been a general and direct grasp of Christianity over the toiler. To the peasantry that remains religious the Church was and is its traditions, its grey stone church, its graveyard with neat tombs and bead wreaths, its ceremonies, processions, banners, chants, and village bands, and Not' Curé, a peasant and yet not a peasant, one of them yet not of them, human like them, yet not altogether human like them, the wonderful village curé of "Madame Bovary," running bluff and serene after drats of Sunday-school urchins, while Emma Bovary wants to confess her complicated and ingenuous perversities.

M. le Curé has lost his status as one having authority from the temporal as well as the spiritual power. In the long run that may undermine him in some villages. But he has already left villages where the Church, who husbands her forces and her funds very sensibly, thought it not worth the expense of keeping him. Where it was worth her while to keep him on,

not only in the pious peasantry but in the peasantry that simply clings to its grey stone church, it does not look as if he will cease to be "Not' Curé," nor as if the little grey church will cease to mean some peacefulness even to the peasant who does not "practise" religion but only looks up at its shy sweet old spire when he comes from the fields to the wine-shop and goes from the wine-shop home.

The future of Christian faith in France is not a French problem, but part of a world problem which no one can solve. Christianity was first and most vigorously sapped in France: that is no reason why, if the Christian gods ever die, they should die first in France and the cities in which new gods be crowned be the French cities. The immediate French question is one less of Christian faith than of social organisation by the Christian Church. That organisation certainly is and long will be the chief care of the Church of Rome, which is the preponderant Christian Church in France, without a rival that counts; and the social activity of the Church was greatly stimulated by disestablishment.

## CHAPTER XIII

### EARNERS

FRANCE has proportionately the smallest solely wage-earning class of any country. She has a large population of wage-earners, but a very large proportion of it does not depend upon wages alone for a living. If statistics were available for the purpose they might even show that among French workers whom employers pay it is a minority that has nothing but its pay to live upon. If unskilled labour and certain kinds of skilled labour be deducted, probably the majority of French wage-earners will be found to be owners. The ordinary navvy, the coal-miner, the factory hand in certain large industrial centres, live from hand to mouth in France, as in most other countries; they are solely wage-earners. In nearly all other trades and industries the French employer employs a man or woman with capital, a tiny capital, behind him. Your general cook in Paris has a few thousand francs in railway shares or Rentes; mine consults me periodically about her investments. The waiter at your favourite café asks your opinion on Spanish Government stock, in which he has put his savings. At the Quai d'Orsay I had two most amiably un-



bending friends among the suave and majestic footmen who have the diplomatic traditions and know how to open half a door to Ministers plenipotentiary but to throw, with a swift unbolting top and bottom, the double doors open of the stately rooms in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ambassadors and "personages thereto assimilated." At intervals between diplomatic cares they asked me (being supposed to know the affairs of Europe) what I really thought of Balkan loans, and one was particularly anxious about Turkish fisheries. Both had their own savings, their wife's dower, and their daughters' future dower, invested in foreign Government securities, as became footmen of the Foreign Office. They would have been dumbfounded if I had been surprised that ushers of the Quai d'Orsay, paid 200 francs a month or so, should have capital to invest.

Wage-earners are divided in France, as in most countries, into three types : the clerk who wears a black coat, the skilled artisan, the unskilled labourer. Of these three, it is curious that the peculiar condition governing labour in France, the great division of capital, affects mainly the second. Unskilled labour, of course, owns the smallest share of the capital disseminated throughout the nation. But the black-coated shop clerk owns less than what one would think to be his share of it. In class spirit and in habit of mind he approaches nearest of all wage-earners to the class that owns, and he is on the fringe of the *petite bourgeoisie*. The navy in shirt and baggy corduroys calls him contemptu-

ously a "bourgeois." The stout lady behind the counter of the little café where he plays cards at *la manille* from six to seven, classes him as a bourgeois, and the little café—in democratic France—would sniff at an artisan in his working clothes, who must go to the *marchand de vins*. The shop-clerk derives so much prestige from his black coat: that is about the sum of the advantages he gets from it. Otherwise, being cheap, it is shoddy, and does not keep the cold out nor wear half as well as corduroys, and it sets the mark upon its man of a class to which he is thought, and to which he has the mind, but not the means, to belong.

The London city clerk, badly paid, crushed by competition, forced to "keep up appearances," is worse off than the English coal-miner. The Paris wage-earner in a black coat, happier in some ways—thanks chiefly to his little café—than he would be in London, is less happy in one: his unfortunate propinquity to a class scarcely known in England, the little bourgeoisie that owns little, but owns, and of which he is not but unluckily seems to be. How his particular species arose in France it is not easy to determine. In a nation where ownership is not of the few but of the majority, his class, though far from the bottom of the social scale, owns generally nothing. In its families, the father is a paid employé and often the mother also, the boy follows in his father's footsteps, the girl until she marries (if she has the luck to marry) is one of those patterns of hardworkingness and strength of mind who labour ten hours a day

fashioning the most exquisite woman's luxuries of Paris and to whom no temptation is spared. The glorious customers she makes for were often workgirls like her a year or two ago; but one hears of those who "arrive" thus, not of the thousands who would not start that way, though to and from work they walked the Rue de la Paix every day. The girl, offered everything that tempts a girl, trudging gaily, laughing at mud and rain, at splashing and death-dealing motor-cars, to her "Metro," laughing again at the wild crush and rude discomfort of the train, going back cheerily to her drab, mean home, to the tired father, the snappish mother, the brother who wants to be out of it all and in the gay life, is a good girl. The poor, mean home owns nothing but its wages. It never seems to be able to put by, and the homes that went before it do not seem to have put by. The smallest shopkeeper started from some savings, and, if he succeeds at all, saves more.

He is of the bourgeoisie that owns: the clerks make up the blackcoated "proletariat," called "bourgeois" and not of the bourgeoisie, kept at arms' length by the labourer and looked down upon secretly by the very lady behind the little café counter, who for her part is no mere wage-earner without substance. The French, especially the Paris, clerk, almost an anomaly in French life, and the much more likely product of a society in which much fewer owned and many more earned, is perhaps the most defenceless element in the general French people. The little bourgeoisie has that strongest of defences,

capital, however small; the labourer who lives from hand to mouth has some combining organisation behind him, even if it be comparatively loose and powerless. The black-coated wage-earners are scarcely organised at all; Trade Unions hold them aloof because of the black coat. The very conditions of their employment prevent common action; they are hangers on to the owning classes, the employer may at any time choose one employee for promotion to command a large salary and eventually a share in the business. The ordinary clerk who remains one all his life is the most helpless of wage-earners.

The skilled French artisan is the aristocrat of wage-earners. To begin with, he is seldom only a wage-earner. The cabinet-maker, the artist in artificial flowers, the expert who makes new cabinets look like old, the furrier who turns rabbit into Russian sable, hardly ever work without a little substance of capital to go upon. They work upon a solid basis, they build up small businesses carefully, they touch the bourgeoisie by realities, not by the black coat. They form a class entirely distinct from that of the ordinary labourer—a fact of great import in French labour problems, and in part unfavourable to the future of French labour. They are skilled artisans, sometimes artists (their “faking” of furniture is marvellous), and they do not rub shoulders with the common worker, whose definition is that among half a dozen trades he can pass from one to another without effort.

The real artisan has only one trade. In France he still retains some traditions from the



craftsmen of old; the Faubourg St. Antoine keeps splendidly honest workers in carpentry still, though badly led astray by designers of spurious "art" furniture. There are even artist cobblers, and one is now almost historic who, being arrested for an Anarchist, refused to go with the police until he had finished to his own liking a pair of shoes, ordered no doubt by a not at all Anarchist customer. These artisans—Anarchist or not, but, when Anarchist, only by artistic temperament—keep clear of the mere labourers.

The aristocracy of the artisan is one of the most important elements in the problems of French labour. According to the point of view, it is a fortunate or unfortunate thing for the future of French labour. The artisan, or at least the most skilled artisan, has never yet taken to the policy of common action. With few exceptions, those, for instance, of electricians and engine-drivers (but the latter had only one experience of common action, which was a defeat), the highly skilled worker will not throw in his lot in France with the less skilled. The good cabinet-maker, the good locksmith, the excellent maker of Louis XV arm-chairs still take up an extreme conservative attitude towards Trade Unionism; it is very usual all over France to be told by the serious and solid artisan, "Unions? They are for the ne'er-do-weels. What do men like me want with them?" He holds aloof both through caution and through an aristocratic sense; he sees mostly perils in wide combination, and even for obvious advantages could

scarcely overcome his repugnance to the offer that he should combine with inferior workers merely because they and he work with their hands.

If in the labour world the spirit of united action be the equivalent of the public spirit in the larger world, he has not that public spirit. Looked at from a different—not rightly the opposite—point of view, he has another spirit, that of social preservation. He is, after all, nearer to the small bourgeoisie that owns than to the labour world, and nearer to it really than the black-coated clerk is. That is one of the underlying facts that complicate French labour problems. The influence of the bourgeoisie, the great people that owns little individually, but owns, is felt throughout the nation. The artisan aristocracy, owning or not—and it often owns—is drawn towards the bourgeoisie, not towards merely wage-earning labour, aims at taking its place in the former, not at guiding the latter. That is a secret of French social solidity and a secret of the weakness of French labour movements. The good artisan would rather be a little bourgeois than a labour leader. I have often heard him say bitinglly, “They can afford to agitate, they have nothing,” meaning that he had something.

Finally, the only organised labour in France is labour that owns nothing. This is no doubt more or less true of most countries; in England, particularly, the most powerful Trade Unions, which are collectively often wealthy, are made up of members who individually live from hand to

mouth, have no property behind them, put by nothing even of high wages, and every Saturday morning are paupers, save for their furniture, their clothes, and their vested interest in the Union, until the pay hour comes round. But in France the position of labour is different from what it is in almost all other countries. The highly paid artisan seldom is without thrift and therefore seldom owns nothing. Between the man who owns nothing and him who owns, however little, there is a chasm that does not exist in other nations. The highly skilled English artisan would not dream of being ashamed to have put nothing by and to have no more "stake in the country" save his better brains, training, and trade connexion than the plain navvy.

In the French people not to have "one brave sou" is always something of a disgrace. Thrift, and the ties that keep a large part of the wage-earning class tacked on to the fringe of the little bourgeoisie create special labour conditions in France; these causes precisely drive away from social preservation the other class of wage-earners, that does not own and does not save. Where a strong and rich Trade Union is composed, as in England, of men who individually own nothing, the unskilled and low-paid wage-earner does not feel a pariah, and combination rather steadies than excites him, leads him to society instead of away from it. In French labour, the highly skilled, well-paid, and often owning artisan fights shy, barring some important exceptions, from combination; organised

labour is organised by the thriftless, the hot-heads, the devil-may-cares, who, being outside the pale of workers on the fringe of the bourgeoisie, go resolutely against social preservation.

The psychology of French wage-earners accounts for the position of labour problems in France. The clerk in his black coat is almost entirely outside any common action of labour; the most skilled artisans are drawn into such action only seldom and reluctantly; less skilled or unskilled labour forms the bulk of concerted and organised labour. How will the greatest problem of the modern world work out for this particular nation? Trade Unions, nearly half a century younger in France, where they were long forbidden by law,<sup>1</sup> than in England, have never in France possessed power as measured by money.<sup>2</sup> They have held, and intermittently hold, political power. The word “Syndicalism” was coined in France: it originally meant exactly the same thing as Trade Unionism, there being no other translation into French of “Trade Union” than “Syndicate.” Driven by French logic and not held back, for reasons noted above, by French social realism, Syndicalism emerged into a theory of social revolution, communism containing a number of equally sovereign unions, each union of workers seizing the total means of production in its trade, the

<sup>1</sup> 1881-2: laws sanctioning “professional syndicates,” but with practically prohibitive clauses regarding their ownership of property. 1901: “Associations” law (Waldeck-Rousseau) granting ownership rights on property.

<sup>2</sup> In 1906 the average annual income of the General Labour Federation was 48,875 francs.



sovereign groups combining to ensure the working of the new society; Syndicalism thus was simply Trade Unionism carried to its extreme logical conclusion, but only French labour leaders thought of carrying it thither.

The theory of Syndicalism, come from France, exercised great influence upon labour movements all over the world. In practice French Syndicalism at home achieved a great deal less than the old steady Trade Unions of England. No labour upheavals in modern times anywhere, certainly not in France, equalled the great coal strike and railway strike in England. French mining strikes have always been partial and generally futile; a postal strike<sup>1</sup> counted because public servants rebelled; a railway strike<sup>2</sup> threw the business of the country out of gear for a few days, but the Government<sup>3</sup> called out railway servants as reservists by mobilisation orders, making them liable to martial law, and there was no more strike.

French Syndicalism had mistaken its strength and strained it, whereas English Trade Unions had husbanded theirs and used it, knowing what they were about. It is essential to understand the parallel history of the labour movement and of Parliamentary Socialism in France. French Trade Unionism and the French Parliamentary Socialist party have never worked in

<sup>1</sup> In 1909.

<sup>2</sup> In 1910.

<sup>3</sup> M. Briand, Prime Minister. He had previously been a Syndicalist himself. In 1899 he told a Socialist Congress to go to battle with voting papers if they liked, but also, if they liked, with "pikes, swords, pistols, rifles," against the bourgeois.

harmony. French Members of Parliament, being paid, have never had to call upon a Union for a salary; it is very doubtful whether they would ever have got one. The antagonism between Trade Unionism and Parliamentary Socialism dates far back, and it was an early contention of the former that Members of Parliament, as such, should not be accepted as delegates to Labour Congresses, a parliamentary constituency not being held equivalent to a union. I recollect an International Labour Congress in the nineties at which the French section split into two violently quarrelling parts upon that question, and the side that objected to Members of the Chamber of Deputies, M. Jaurès and others, being qualified as delegates when they represented only parliamentary constituencies and not Trade Unions as well, included several delegates supposed to represent unions which had in fact little or no existence.<sup>1</sup>

Anti-Parliamentarianism is a tendency that exists in all labour parties in the world; in France it has some peculiar traits. In the birth-place of Trade Unionism, England, the union was an old and powerful organisation before a Parliamentary Labour party was thought of; the union, for many years, while a strong weapon for the cause of labour, was also, because it had a history and vested interests, a retarding or at least a preserving force, a brake upon the wheel,

<sup>1</sup> A student at the time, I am sorry to say that, though an Englishman, I was the official delegate at that particular International Labour Congress of one of those phantom French Trade Unions.

and labour in England has sometimes rebelled precisely against the conservative authority of its unions. In France the Parliamentary Socialist party is as old as Trade Unionism, and prospered more.<sup>1</sup> Far from being the restraining influence, the Syndicates have always been the goad, and have usually driven the Parliamentary Socialist party faster than it meant to go. At one time this party had almost reached Cabinet power;<sup>2</sup> it was on the verge of being called upon to build at last, and French Socialism in Parliament might have been the first in the world to be given the chance in an anciently organised nation to show what building or rebuilding it could do.

Whether French Socialism was wrong in rejecting the chance or right in thinking with international Socialism that the time was not ripe, could be long discussed. My point is that the French Parliamentary Socialist party, and

<sup>1</sup> Unified Socialists in Chamber : 1906, 54 ; 1910, 75 ; 1914, 101.

<sup>2</sup> Under the administration of M. Combes (1902-1905) the Socialist party, not then "Unified," formed the "bloc" with the Radicals and certain Moderate Republicans. The "bloc" had originally been formed by the Republican Coalition against "Nationalism" and other Conservative parties more or less anti-Republican, and had arisen out of the definite championship of the cause of Dreyfus by the Republican majority led by Waldeck-Rousseau. During the Combes administration, moderate Republicans soon left the "bloc." The International Socialist Congress of Amsterdam (1904) ordered that no Socialist should enter into compact with a "bourgeois" or "capitalist" Government. The French Parliamentary Socialist party was "unified" upon this pledge, the "unification" of M. Jaurès, just because of his connexion with the "bloc," being long demurred at but finally decided.

not least M. Jaurès, believed in taking the chance, but was overruled by French Trade Unionism, which was not the brake on the wheel, but the accelerator. Un-“unified” M. Jaurès, above all a consummate political tactician, might have been the Prime Minister, and (with some compromises, of course) the Socialist Prime Minister, of France. As it was, the Parliamentary Socialist party, once “unified,” was relentlessly driven by the Syndicates; in all the labour agitation culminating in the railway strike of 1910 the numerically powerful Socialist party in Parliament never led but was driven, and offered the undignified spectacle of a supposed brain not only not commanding the limbs, but not knowing what the limbs would do next, and not only that, but pretending, whenever they did anything, to have ordered it.

At the lull in labour agitation, the positions remained about the same. Trade Unionism and Parliamentary Socialism were as jealous of each other as before, and many other smaller splits<sup>1</sup> continued. French Socialism as yet shows no signs of any such organising capacity as leads to victory. The Parliamentary Socialist party will

<sup>1</sup> In 1914, in Paris, *L'Humanité* was M. Jaurès' paper, i.e. that of the Unified Socialist Party in Parliament, *La Bataille Syndicaliste* that of the C.G.T., or General Labour Federation, and of the Revolutionary Trade Unions, and *La Guerre Sociale* that of M. Gustave Hervé, ex-teacher, once a militant anti-militarist, afterwards a Socialist “on his own,” still violent. All three newspapers were quite as violent against each other as various Royalist newspapers were against one another.

To-day, of course, *L'Humanité*, *La Bataille* (it has dropped “syndicaliste”), and *La Guerre Sociale*, which became *La Victoire* on Jan. 1, 1916, are all against the Boches.



steadily, if slowly, increase in numbers ; its influence does not increase with its numbers, and it was more numerous than ever before when it was ignored by Syndicalism during the labour agitation at the beginning of the century. Will Syndicalism and the Syndicates increase in power ? More votes for Socialist Members of Parliament precisely do not mean more strength to Trade Unionism. Many a worker who by temperament and way of living is essentially conservative gives his vote to the Socialist candidate by tradition—Socialism has become a tradition. He does not dream of joining revolutionary Syndicalism, and will think twice before joining any Syndicate, and will first ascertain it to be quite safe and solid, solid as his own business.

Syndicalism has indeed some forces behind it : a proportion of elementary school teachers, for instance, who count the more because they are Government servants, and because they teach. They may possibly teach revolutionary Syndicalism to new generations ; the Church, by anti-Republican teaching, plays as usual into the hands of revolutionists. But the French village school teacher, as a rule, comes from a curious class, neither peasant nor artisan by descent, neither farmer nor townsman, a half-baked, rudimentary intellectual class. It has no ties with the village, it is not of the country, it owns no fields. There seems little likelihood that the village schoolmaster, often a diminutive Robespierre by temperament, is really forming young revolutionary minds in France. If the social

revolution comes in France, some of the teachers will perhaps have helped it. Factory hands will have made it; but they will not make it until, having, to begin with, paid their subscription to their Unions, they learn what real organisation means, until Syndicalism has become practical, efficient, and as realist as the Syndicalist is in his own every-day life, and until those who profess to work for a new French society have ceased to work against one another, the Unions to goad the Parliamentary Socialist party, the Parliamentary Socialist party to sit upon the Unions. But even that will not suppress the French peasant; while he owns his field it is difficult to think that there will ever be a social revolution in France. If it comes it will, anyhow, not include nationalisation of the soil. If ever the French Syndicalist go to the French peasant and propose him that, I pity the French Syndicalist under the pitchforks.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OWNERS

By these I mean the great people of the French bourgeoisie. Others own: the peasant on the land, the few great landlords, the financial king, or the financial adventurer. The two classes that have the real sense of ownership in France are the peasantry and the bourgeoisie. Other owners own to spend; these two classes are first of all and above all possessors. With the peasantry the bourgeoisie is the backbone of France. Conditions of life change in France as elsewhere; the bourgeoisie remains, and probably has increased, not diminished, in actual numbers and in deep influence.

What is the bourgeoisie? It has no exact equivalent in any other country. It is not the English or German middle class, nor the Russian merchant class. Let me try to catalogue and define the characteristics of the bourgeois proper. He must own, and he must have owned. He must have at least a generation or two of bourgeoisie behind him; a real bourgeois is not made in one. He may follow one of the so-called "liberal" professions, nowadays he may even practise one of the arts as his calling; they do not disqualify him if his backing and substance

be of the bourgeoisie. Indeed most modern French artists are bourgeois by connexions and descent, which is a good thing for their bread and butter, whatever it may be for their art. The bourgeois of to-day may be an artist without fear; the artist in his youth is afraid to be a bourgeois, only afterwards he discovers that few masters were real Bohemians.

But even the bourgeois of to-day must remain a bourgeois; in modern democratic France the tradition is as strong as ever. M. Durand, calling himself *du Rand*, then, after five years or so, *Durand de la Durandière*, cuts himself off from the real bourgeoisie; even a papal marquisate, honestly purchased for ten thousand francs or so, cuts him off. I knew a Durand who in his plain Durand father's life-time called himself *Count du Rand*; when his father died still plain Durand, he promoted himself *Marquis du Rand*, Count being the courtesy title of a Marquis's son. I knew another son of less easy-going Durand who in his fierce old bourgeois father's life-time did not dare be aught but Durand; a month after his father's death he became *Durand de la Durandière*; six months after he was *D. de la Durandière*, and a year later and ever after he was *Monsieur de la Durandière*. It should be understood that the real French bourgeoisie has certainly as much contempt as the real French aristocracy for the *Durands de la Durandière*. On the whole I should say that the French bourgeoisie has more solid and ancient pride of caste than nine-tenths of the French aristocracy, and as much as the



ancient remaining tenth, which is as exclusive as the most exclusive in Europe. There are so many De la Durandières that the bourgeoisie is inclined to look upon every "de" as spurious *a priori* until proved genuine, and to question whether any title is even papal that is not proved by repute. In certain foreign drawing-rooms in Paris, chiefly South American, everybody is "Marquis" or at least "Count"—very few venturing to be "Dukes"; the French bourgeoisie will not be, and would not be, seen in those drawing-rooms, and there is no plain M. Durand there—he is too proud. Even towards the "de" that is genuine and the titles that are not papal plain M. Durand is proud. In the democratic France of to-day the old bourgeoisie has retained some hostility against even the aristocracy that is really old. It might have been expected, and it might have seemed natural that in the changes of times the old bourgeoisie should have joined the old aristocracy, if not against common enemies, still to defend a broadly common cause; but that has not happened, or only as an exception. The bourgeoisie has remained distinct, even the oldest and wealthiest bourgeoisie, from the descendants of the old aristocracy; often pursuing the same conservative ends and professing the same social conservatism as the families who hark back frankly to the Monarchy before the First Revolution, it has never thrown in its lot with these, and rarely even has rubbed with them at all or worked socially or politically side by side with them.

The bourgeois, to be a real bourgeois, must be

an honest plain French citizen with a definite place in the social system of France. No adventurers, no traveller from lands of adventure or bound thither, no wanderer, no marginal members of society need seek admittance; the bourgeoisie is a close corporation in which every one's social status is clearly known and can be proved, and almost every one's thought is pre-ordained also.

The light changing waves of irregular life that splash amusingly through half Parisian society are shut off from the bourgeoisie by locks almost never opened; when the sluice-gates do open, a stream flows, soon stemmed again, outwards, never back into the bourgeoisie. This lives side by side with some of the lightest, gayest, freest, most fleeting, shifting and lawless life in the world, and not only knows no contact with it but does not know it. The heedless traveller does not learn that the side of Paris he sees is at least as strange to the French bourgeoisie as it is to him; that the latter looks upon most of the Parisian celebrities whose doings fill the world's newspapers from as far as if they were the popular figures in China or Peru, that it would not think of having them in its midst, and that they find it infinitely easier to be lionised in the drawing-rooms of other countries than to be received in those of the French bourgeoisie.

France is the country in Europe—at all events Paris is the town—where the adventurer of every kind has the greatest scope, the financial adventurer, the social adventurer, the sexual adven-

turer. In less than ten years a clever man may rise by thrift and ingenuity first, and by ingenious swindling afterwards, from a small café waiter to wealth and a commanding position in a certain Paris society, and enjoy both for some time before arrest and conviction. In the same sort of society a man may get on by the sole effect of his own push; no one knows why every one makes way for him, and in a few years he counts in the "Tout Paris"; he will go on counting to the day of his death, and at first nights, at private views, at sensational art sales he will be pointed out. "There is So and So." Nobody asks who he is or what he has done; he has never been anything, and the only thing he has ever done is self-advertisement. The sexual adventurer "arrives by the women": a careful selection of married mistresses, a judicious play of one against the other, love-making with useful old ladies, influence with influential old gentlemen's mistresses, discretion when his own mistress pleases. He is frankly the pimp and the kept man at once, and all who know that particular Paris society will recognise dozens of him who have "arrived" in no other way. Probably neither he nor his fellows would have got on as easily or as far in another country.

But not all who recognise him and them understand that he and they have not arrived at all or even started on a career in the great French bourgeoisie, and that to the latter this sort of Tout Paris is as foreign as if it were the Tout Timbuctoo. This is a result of the sharp chasms that separate French society to-day.

The writer, knowing the side of France that the rest of the world generally sees, must labour to prove that in the bourgeoisie of France the men are honest and the women respectable. The French bourgeoisie is at once so far from the adventurers of Paris society and so unaware of foreign opinion that it would be dumbfounded to learn of any such proof being made. It looks on amused and unperturbed at the adventures of a certain Tout Paris; its men are quite solid enough to do without dangerous hazards, its women are wives and mothers, and, should they not be the latter and forget they are the former, the adventure is kept quiet, not advertised; maybe punished, sometimes cruelly; not noisily, for the abundant *crimes passionnels* of France seldom happen in the real bourgeoisie. It has much more common sense than sentimentality, perhaps than sentiment.

It certainly does not look at life sentimentally. Perhaps that is its chief virtue. No other human group in the world has as strong a sense of reality. The final qualification for acceptance into the French bourgeoisie is to subscribe to the bourgeois philosophy of life; a man of substance, a man with substantial forbears, a plain and honest citizen, must pass the final test and prove himself a realist. The French bourgeoisie is the backbone of France and in it lives the marrow of national French realism. Political idealists plan or rave, or are on the make, poets dream, artists build in the air, hand-toilers mutter and grumble, and run or are led away with visions of the city of the future: the



bourgeoisie looks merely at what is. No country has had such vigorous revolutionists, none has such a resisting class of realists. It has only one deep religion, the faith in life. Every other belief is but minister to that and feeds that earthly flame.

The French bourgeoisie instinctively judges every question by the same criterion : does this or that help better living ? It has a very strong wish to get the best possible out of life. It does not like social schemes for to-morrow, and it will not hear of any for the day after. It does not at all care for any dreams that may tamper with the facts of life. Parents, goods, a wife, children, and family and fortune carried on in them ; nothing is of any account compared with that. No art or poetry is to be measured with it ; the French bourgeois there finds all the dream he wants. Why should he be asked to want any other ? He is true to his ideal. He is frank to all the facts that he requires, and he blinks none.

There are many different kinds, a whole scale, of bourgeoisie, from the little bourgeois who sells pins, ribbons, shoelaces, knitting-wool and newspapers in a tiny shop still spared by the Universal Emporiums, to the great bourgeois who bequeaths his art collections, half spurious, to the Louvre, with the stipulation that they shall be housed in one gallery and his bust put on a pedestal in the middle. But up and down the scale the same spirit runs, the good and bad, the ridiculous and the sublime spirit of bourgeoisie. There is more moral difference between

the tiny shopkeeper and the electrician whose little girl buys his two papers, the socialist paper and the paper with the best murders and feuilleton, at the shop every morning, than there is between the tiny shopkeeper and the Universal Provider. There is between the latter and the French aristocrat, who (having won at cards from his friends the first refusal of her hand) marries the American Dry Goods King's daughter, an extraordinary difference still in the democratic France of to-day.

The tiny French shopkeeper and the big French shopkeeper never look at life as a gamble, but take it very seriously. The gay, intelligent, hot-headed workman, who has been and may be the spark and fire of French revolutions, takes it as he finds it. This is the sentimental or the furious people. When a girl and boy light a charcoal stove and lie down chastely together to die in a lodging-house, having left pathetic letters explaining that hard parents denied their eternally sworn love, or jump in front of an electric Metropolitan train to a horrible death, with the same sort of letters in their pockets, always printed afterwards in the *Petit Parisien* or the *Petit Journal*, they are boys and girls not of the bourgeoisie but of the earners who do not take life seriously, but hold it at times just worth a few knocks with the police in a street demonstration or a little sentiment and a romantic attitude for after death. The police-court cases of the bourgeoisie are more often sordid than sentimental, squalid money quarrels with a sexual interest running through and revolves

intervening; sometimes they are tragedies, and really tragic, when the deep sense of life as the greatest and most precious thing is deeply stirred by a conflict of passions or of interests.

Earners produced the grisette, not the bourgeoisie. They are the sentiment and sentimentality, the lightness, the gaiety, the Bohemian, café concert, true Montmartre side of France, her lawlessness, gay bravery, quick temper, and a little part, the lightest part, of the poetry of France. The bourgeoisie is almost the exactly opposite side of France: her strong, sober prose. From the little to the great bourgeois, the bourgeoisie is what France finally depends upon, and the lasting canvas upon which her idealists, rebels, artists have embroidered.

The great bourgeois is one of the masters of his time and a modern King, but not an American Copper King or a South African Diamond King; it takes him a few generations, not a few years, to reach Kingship. He always stands with some bourgeois past behind him, and there are almost no completely self-made men in France, a proof at least of the solidity of the nation. He rules, when he gets to the top, as satisfyingly as any copper or diamond king, and perhaps more subtly; he commands the Press discreetly, pulls the strings of Parliament from behind the scenes, makes public opinion without standing in the public eye. His Kingship is real; most of the great affairs of France are ruled by a handful of men. He remains, though a great bourgeois, a bourgeois. It is typical of France

that he is not an adventurer; adventurers get into his midst, but he can never be confused with them. A hundred things distinguish him: the social medium from which he stands out but from which he comes, his family, his womenfolk, the way he looks at life. He does not become an aristocrat; he is too honest for some tricks some dukes of to-day play, but he also has not the manner with which they can be carried through and off. A wealthy and powerful semi-bourgeois, but a parvenu, not a real bourgeois of Paris, tried all his life in vain to get into smart, un-bourgeois society: built a gaudy palace in the Champs Élysées, and nobody went there; financed innumerable causes, and society did not take them up. I met the man once; he was less common than one or two French duchesses picked up by the dukes in American families whom a good many Americans do not know. The ladies might have found it more difficult to marry into the bourgeois' family than to become duchesses. If they had married there, the husbands might not have carried off the *mésalliance* as well as the dukes did.

The middle and the little bourgeoisie are perhaps most characteristic of France. The great bourgeoisie is more cosmopolitan and has much in common with the masters of the modern world all over the world. The former are French to the core, and exclusively French. Families have never for generations counted a member who did not own, who was not an honest citizen with a definite and accepted place in society, who came from anywhere outside, and who did



not think in the French way and in the French bourgeois way. Such families of the middle and little bourgeoisie form the bulk of fixed French life. They are rooted to the tradition, the property, the business, the ideas which are to them what the soil is to the peasantry. Very few noble families whose names go back to before the First French Revolution, and beyond, can prove the same continuity; perhaps almost none, for emigration under the Revolution, the political vicissitudes of the Empire, the Restoration, the Second Empire, and cosmopolitan marriages all over the world afterwards are conditions which affected them but left at least the bulk of the bourgeoisie untouched.

A wonderful *Journal d'un bourgeois pendant la Révolution* shows that the historic or legendary reply to the question, "What did you do under the Terror?" "I lived," is not so witty after all; the mass of the bourgeoisie went on living under the Terror quite quietly and safely, as it has lived ever since. Thus it has been the middle bourgeoisie that has carried on a torch of French vitality—not a flaming torch, throwing sparks, but burning with a steady glow. The French bourgeoisie passed through Revolutions which made a new world for the conservative French peasantry of to-day. Almost the same bourgeoisie has lasted, and has remained homogeneous. It has always been, and is to-day, easier for a family to pass up and down the scale of the bourgeoisie than to get into it or out of it. The mere earners, tossed about, inflamed, crushed by social upheavals, seldom

get into the bourgeoisie. The artisan with the bourgeois instinct easily climbs—it is only a matter of prospering in the world—into the little and thence into the middle bourgeoisie; he really is a bourgeois already.

A middle bourgeoisie family; what a strong, small State it is! A State in itself, and supported by compacts of alliance on every side. I described once a young French mother who took her child of seven to see an older woman of a greater bourgeoisie. “You are indeed right,” said the older and greater bourgeoisie, “to think early of cultivating influence for your children.” Every one who knows the French bourgeoisie will understand that no irony was meant. “Se créer des relations”—the literal version would be to create a connexion, as in commercial travelling. *Ententes cordiales* and alliances defensive and offensive are woven round the family, sustaining it. The second cousin is Keeper of Mortgages at Montélimar, the uncle’s son-in-law is Subprefect at Arras, the son of the father’s college chum is Councillor at the Court of Accounts in Paris—it all makes a web of which the family at Poitiers is the centre.

And each family, from St. Quentin to Toulouse and from Rennes to Gap, is the centre of another such web. The young Government Engineer of Roads and Bridges, Deputy Procurator of the Republic, Professor of Rhetoric, sent away into the provinces, would despair if sent to a place whither his own family web had not spread; and rightly, for, arriving without even a cousin’s cousin or a friend of a friend of his

father in the place, he might as well arrive at the North Pole. But it could not happen, unless he had no family at all, and in that case he would probably never have got into the University, the Law, or the Roads and Bridges. Jews do not stick together more than the French bourgeoisie. It is a great mutual aid society, and to some extent a society for fighting all outsiders, for keeping out the adventurer, or simply the new-comer without credentials, for ensuring that, in case of competition between a competent man it does not know and an incompetent man whose cousin it has heard of, a job going shall go to the latter. The cause of the bourgeoisie comes first; the country can afford to put up with two or three or a dozen ill-filled posts, never with a rift in the solidarity of the bourgeoisie.

In this network of alliances the family is the individual State, with a State's will to live, almost with a mere state morality and philosophy, though softened by human intercourse and civilisation. Polished and cultured, it is still in its view of other families not far from the attitude of one nation to another. It has an almost fierce conviction that it must live, and that all the rest comes after; that it must first of all live as a unit, one tribe among, often against, other tribes. The solidarity of this family is proof against almost any other instinct. There is a simple stock example: if, over some trivial thing, obviously a man's mother were in the wrong and a stranger in the right, what would the man do? Take his mother's part of course,

says the Frenchman. If the thing mattered, all men would take their mothers' part, right or wrong. But if an Englishman's mother took the wrong umbrella, he would first look at the umbrella; the Frenchman would begin by words with the other lady. Fair play cannot stand up to the solidarity of the family.

The French mother of the ancient, primeval bourgeoisie is no ordinary mother, but a lioness with her whelps. No mother in the world is more devoted. She would be a scandal if she were not completely devoted. It might sometimes be better for the children if she were less devoted. She does not lead her own life, and is not supposed to. The true French father does not lead his own life either, and may not. There are no individual lives; there is only the life of the family. The family may have sprung from the merest marriage of convenience; it is the same holy family since it has come into the world. The Frenchman's wife may be of small concern to him; the mother of his children he holds sacred. The French wife and mother is always a mother first, and would cheerfully sacrifice her husband for her children's sake, and herself also, of course. She and he live henceforth only in their offspring.

It is a narrow life, and not always the best for the children themselves, but it is a life that has nobleness in it. When children grow up and parents grow old, the latter may find, with sinking hearts, that they offered themselves up too wholly, and that they might have helped their children better by living their own lives more;



they sacrificed personal aims, ideas, interests, slew their own personalities, and now, old, have nothing to offer grown-up sons and daughters but reminders of past devotion, which henceforth will not help these at all. There can be, in quiet lives, no greater tragedy of old age. The man who lived his own life, and brushed his children aside if they were hampering him, may be found, when they are men and women and he is old, of more use as guide and example to them than the parent who was only a parent.

The vice of the French bourgeoisie certainly is the narrowing of life. Yet there is some dumb unconscious poetry of deed in this narrow service at the shrine of life. Parents merged into their children; every outside idea jettisoned, every penny saved for them; the daughter's dowry scraped together sou by sou, every scrap of influence and patronage hoarded up for the sons; the girl watched over hour by hour by the mother, whose relation to her daughter in the French family is the fastest human intimacy known; the mother watching over the boy as closely, counselling him for the world and learning the world she does not know to counsel him, looking it frankly in the face for his sake, taking, without a thought of false shame, a young man's point of view of the world (which she had never dreamt of before), and if needs be consoling, protecting, even advising him in his amours; there is poetry lived in this will to live. There may be little poetry thought. The family of the bourgeoisie has no time for thinking it, and is too much bent on solely living. Children

prolong the parents, and these seek a kind of immortality in them; but it is a material immortality, just a lasting of this day's life. The perfect mother, sometimes sublime, demeaning herself for her son's sake to a world she learns only to help him—she is not going to be a hypocrite for her own sake when it is only her boy that matters—has not the slightest idea that there is any poetry in herself. Parents saving, cheese-paring, sometimes tricking, always on the make, for their children's future, have not the slightest idea that there is any poetry in themselves. The poetry is visible indeed only to the outside observer; perhaps it exists only for him. Within the French bourgeois family there is exceedingly little room for fancy. The very notion of it shocks. The family is the will to live at its plainest.

Yet not life without ornaments. The French bourgeoisie has a better taste in them than any other similar class. It is familiar with them, and has a natural and easy attitude towards them. It is not frightened by art and literature. It is used to the artist's standpoint, and the literary way of looking at things. So many men of letters and artists have sprung from it.

Even the little bourgeoisie understands that art matters to a certain extent; the shop-keeper goes to a picture-show without perfect innocence and with the notion that the way the picture is painted must be looked at as well as the story it tells; the bagman enjoys the way in which the daily amorous, tickling, or harrowing short story in his own *sou journal* is written;

the fat lady from behind the café counter judges at the play whether it be well put together. Not the artistic sense, but the notion that there is one, the idea that it may add to the pleasure of this world, runs through the bourgeoisie from top to bottom; the idea that by looking at life with an artist's eyes one may perhaps get more fun out of it. That is a serviceable definition of art. In so far, the bourgeoisie has a conception of art. No other equivalent class is as familiar, for example, with the idea that there is an art of writing and that there is pleasure in understanding it.

A Guy de Maupassant, a Gustave Flaubert, were and are appreciated by the French middle class; of what other middle class could the equivalent be said? The bourgeoisie is highly civilised, it has refined the pleasures, cared for the ornaments of life. It has adorned life, but has not disguised it; the ornaments remain ornaments; if they hamper the structure, cut them away. Art in moderation gives pleasure; if it were to interfere with life it must be got rid of at once. Civilised, refined, and cultured, the bourgeoisie never lets its culture sap its realism. Art, but as an ornament; pleasurable imagination, not fancy; pleasant verse, not poetry—these would endanger realism. Everything that seems to keep the steady lamp of life burning serves; but not dreams, mystery, poetry, that make the flame dance and flicker.

Will the bourgeoisie still in the future keep the flame of French realism steadily burning? What may happen in the future materially and morally

to the bourgeois ? If the great social upheaval ever comes, the bourgeois, with the largest bulk of vested interests divided among the greatest number of individuals that any country knows, will be the strongest bulwark against it and will put up the best fight against any champions of social change. Of moral change and of moral decomposition in the bourgeois, some French observers see signs. I do not, and I think they do not look in the right perspective. Expensive motor-cars, big rents, fanciful fashions, costume balls, curious dances ; France is going to the dogs, and the old bourgeoisie is done for. At that rate all modern society is going to the dogs. Compared with the same society the world over, the French bourgeoisie still owns most, husbands most, thinks most of the future, serves home gods most, sees life most really, and most strives to live its life.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE SOIL

THE French peasantry owns, but is not a bourgeoisie; earns, but not wages; enjoys—does it enjoy? In a village of the Île de France I knew the widow Evras—short, thick, ruddy, grey-haired, pleasant, and serious. She had seven fields and three farms, and two sons and a daughter under age. At dusk in her tiled kitchen, an oil-lamp lighting the smoky hearth and floor, the serious men and women of the village met. One had an ailing cow—she prescribed; another was at law with a neighbour over a field boundary stone—she knew the legal precedents; a third had a son who wanted to go to Paris—she knew such cases and could advise. The serious village centred round the Mère Evras. The village can be reached from Paris by motor in an hour and a half. Madame Evras in her last years ruled the village, a wise woman, for fifty years before a worker. Her daughter married a serious villager's son. Of her sons one "went to Paris"—one heard no more—the other tilled his third share of her seven fields.

I never knew the Père Evras, but I knew the Père Jaunet, also within an hour or two of Paris.

He went to bed drunk on Saturday nights ; on other nights he gave shrewd counsel over his kitchen fire. Every week-day morning he was up before the sun, guided the plough, clipped his vines, nursed his salads, dined off cabbage and potato stew, went back to the plough, fed his poultry, brought in his cows, and at dusk supped off potatoes and leeks and gave counsel.

Widower Raton, not much further from Paris, had worked hard, but was resting when I knew him. He married ; his second wife was said to have " a head to herself." He had fields and farms, and " a woollen stocking " which they had filled. His wife died suddenly ; he said he never found where she had hid his savings. He lived on crusts, still looking for the hoard. He died, and the woollen stocking was found in his coat pocket ; he had died with the satisfaction of thinking that every one thought his hoard lost.

The Père Baigne-dans-le-Beurre, by his nickname, wallowed in wealth ; in spite of his nickname it had scarcely softened him. He was over-jolly with any bourgeois out of whom he could make two sous a day ; he was honestly jolly by himself at regular dates, twice a month. The rest of the time he was hardly human. A crust picked up in the lane would go to his soup ; his daughter he never knew again after she had spent twenty francs of his for a new dress ; in partnership over farm management he cheated his own son as hard as he could, and when his wife died he for ever after went into political opposition to the Town Council because it refused to

pay for her funeral as a pauper. He died with the satisfaction of knowing that he had been on the make all his life, and had always done his neighbour. His son now carries on the torch.

Balzac in the *Père Goriot* and the *Paysans* is true, and even romantically dirty Zola in *La Terre* is true. Guy de Maupassant's Norman peasants are truest of all. Yet no one French writer even has said all that the French peasant is, perhaps because none looked in sufficient perspective. The French peasant is the backbone of the French soil, as the French bourgeois is the backbone of French cities. The French peasant is often not a lovable person; perhaps the genuine one never is to any outsider. He is as ruthlessly hard and dry as any French storyteller has made him out to be. Ease, open-handedness, good cheer, he has probably less than any other countryman in the world. In his love for the soil he is sometimes scarcely human; his field may be more to him than mother, wife, or child. But he has even so a grandeur, a grim grandeur, and a national significance for France that even French writers have not described, seeing him from too near. Probably no country has such strong reserves rooted to the soil. In agriculture France is a self-sufficient country, and she grows enough wheat to feed herself. She still breeds peasants enough to stock her soil, and of the same old rooted breed. The French peasant is almost identical all over France. The Basque French peasant, who is still half a foreigner, as much Basque as French, and the Norman French peasant, whom his-

torical chance might have made an Englishman, are more akin now even than the Norman is to the Sussex yeoman, his neighbour of just over the way.

The French peasantry is a force without which no French Government can think of counting. It is not one that appears on the surface of French politics, but it is always a directing force beneath. The return effect of political influences from the head has also been strong. Politics among the French peasantry is one of the questions which is least easy to understand in France to-day. The first thing to understand is that, for various reasons and in spite of various obstacles, the great majority of the French peasantry has completely accepted the Republic. The one foremost apparent reason why that should have been is of course the First French Revolution and the institution of small freehold landlordship. But that argument has ceased almost to be modern: peasant ownership of the land has passed into French history; the Republican Government has long ceased to be thought of as the Government that, after dire upheavals, split up the land more or less among peasant holders. The French peasant for the last half-century has forgotten that history. Things to-day are utterly different. The French peasant owner does not think of a possibility of his not owning the land; his acceptance of the Republic rests upon other reasons.

After twenty years or less of the Third Republic the French peasant took to the Republic finally. It was accepted on the countryside as



the stable, natural, and logical regime of France. That, more than anything else, made the Third Republic secure. The peasantry had old leanings to the magnate made by the two Empires, older leanings to the squire made by the Monarchy. The Republic of to-day, after many previous Republics and upheavals, turned out stronger and more durable and more serious for the soil itself than previous Governments for two centuries. The French peasant was won, and it is not easy to win over the knotty, canny French peasant. He agreed to the Republic, and to keep the Republic became his conservatism, which to-day is probably the truest expression of French conservatism. The Republic might have the backing of all the wage-earning industrial classes and yet be shaky. It has almost all that support; as long as it has also that of the majority of the peasantry, and thus rests directly upon the greater part of French soil, it will with difficulty be shaken. Some provinces and districts, those where the Church of Rome has retained strong influence, have remained Royalist, or might, though a Bonaparte would stand a better popular chance with a portion of the town middle classes, yet welcome one: Brittany, Vendée, parts of Normandy. Over almost all the remainder of French soil the conservative French peasant is a Conservative Republican. He looks to no Monarchical or Autocratic restoration to improve his lot; he is shrewd, and can see well that he would gain nothing by any change that way, as he foresees no gain by any in the opposite direction. French

things can never be understood until it is understood that in this sense the Republican Government of France is the Government of social preservation, not of change, and that the French soil looks upon it thus.

The peasantry, which much more efficiently helps to support the Third French Republic than it ever helped to institute it, has been in return influenced by Republican administration and policy in various and curious ways. The party politics of the French peasant are not always easy to understand or capable of explanation. A complete political map of the French soil would be a hard and in large part—for urban if not for rural districts—an ephemeral work. Some comparatively lasting outlines may be drawn for the rural districts. The Île de France, Champagne, the south-east, and in a lesser degree the south-west, of France, are in partisan terminology more radically Republican than the rest of the country; that is, broadly, they are more divorced from the Church. The influence of Paris upon the Île de France explains the latter's politics. In other cases, in that of Provence for instance, the explanation is hard to seek. Almost every Radical in Parisian politics comes from the south. Why? The Marseillais have a century-old reputation. But even the peasant of the south returns a Radical Member of Parliament. To the wanderer in Provence, no country seems less planned by nature or shaped by man for radical change than those vineyards, sunny fields, olive groves, and towns lightly slumbering upon a Roman, Greek, and Phœnician

past. Is there, however, any more real "Radicalism" or "Socialist Radicalism," if the party names be taken literally, in the colder, harder, deeper peasant of grey Île de France?

The Republic has come to be the French peasant's idea of a preserving organism through a very few simple measures. Really two have made his idea of the Republic what it is: the nursing of agriculture and the struggle against the Church of Rome. Determined protection of French agriculture has been built up round the peasant, and he would be ungrateful indeed if he were not a Republican. Various parties, in particular a moderate Republican party and a Socialist party, put at various times free trade in their programme; none ever attempted to put it into practice. The wall of tariffs always continued to shield the peasant. Other classes of the community paid for it, the whole community in the long run might pay for it; that is a controversial point. The peasant proprietor, anyhow, continued to benefit, and free trader and protectionist alike must agree that the position of the modern French peasant proprietor is the strongest argument for protectionism.

The chief political activity of the parties that governed the Third Republic up to Disestablishment was, save for two or three intervals of "reaction," their struggle against the Church of Rome. "Radicalism" and "Socialist Radicalism" were born of that struggle, lived for it and by it, and may die for want of a stimulus, if the struggle ever cease. Where those two parties ruled in rural districts, "Anti-clericalism" un-

doubtedly ruled also. Where moderate Republicans ruled, it ruled less completely, but it ruled; at least no politician but one prepared to be called an anti-Republican could afford to pass in the countryside for a "clerical." Anti-clericalism, political war against the political Church, certainly was, and doubtless will still be, a matter of life and death for the Republic. Anti-clericalism, with all its exaggerations, was necessary. The subject is dealt with elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> What matters here is that the soil felt this: the French peasant-owner of the soil was anti-clerical because he was Republican, usually for no other reason. He was not anti-clerical because he was irreligious, though he might be irreligious; he was anti-clerical because the Church meant "Clericalism," Clericalism was an active policy, and that policy meant the upset of the Republican Government, and because, finally, Clericalism made for upheaval and the Republic stood for conservatism. Was it the fault or the misfortune of the Church that the Church policy came to mean radical change from the established Republican system, and the policy against the Church the preservation of that system? That also is discussed elsewhere. The peasant did not discuss the rights, he only saw the facts as far as he could see them. He saw only that the curé was generally taught to work against the Republican Government, and that the latter stood for present power, stability, and prospects, and he went to the latter. He was seldom irreligious.

<sup>1</sup> "Churches."



It would be a great mistake to imagine that Anti-clericalism in the French village means war on religion. In some villages, in the Île de France, in Champagne, but in very few, the peasant does not get married in church and does not have his children baptized. Compared with the rest of the country, these are extraordinary exceptions. There is barely one in a hundred villages of anti-clerical France in which marriage before the Registrar—the Mayor—is called a marriage at all, or in which not to christen a baby, or to let the dying die without absolution, will not be thought a family crime. The same villages vote regularly for Radical Members of Parliament. The two things have nothing to do with one another; the latter is politics, the former is, if not faith, at least tradition, of which collective faith is a great deal made up.

The Curé and the Château: conservative rural France has sometimes been thus summed up, and rural Republican France has been summed up as against Curé and Château. There are a number of errors in both judgments. The anti-clerical peasant is no foe to the curé as spiritual minister, for the irreligious peasant is rare. The peasant has no knowledge of the château except in a few regions where a feudal tradition still reigns. Where the curé is the creature of the château, he is either the pastor of his flock or the bugbear of the village. Where the curé is but the village priest he is “not’ curé” to anti-clerical almost as much as to church-going villagers. I knew a townlet in the Île de France where the mothers said they had

their reasons for forbidding their girls to go alone to see M. le Curé. But they never thought of not sending them to him for the catechism class, or of staying away from church when he said Mass on Sundays and preached. It is only on the rare manor lands left where the hereditary squire still rules whose forefathers ruled before him that squire and priest are identified. Even there, fighting the Château and the Curé can scarcely be called an important item in the aggressive Republican programme. The few châteaux that have retained their ancient power wield it absolutely, and it can no more be beaten down than a great English landlord's gamekeeper can be captured by English Radicalism; but it is exercised in very small areas, and has not the slightest influence outside. There are but a sprinkling of real squires left in France. As for the château's curé, he has no power of his own at all, and the most vigorous Anti-clericalism wastes no powder and shot on him that can be better used against the organised political Church. Where there is no château overshadowing the village, and that is the most characteristic and typical French village, the priest might perhaps have been used precisely as an instrument by the Republic, if the history both of the Republic and of the Church had been different. The struggle between Church and State in the countryside has been and still is strongest in the village school. It will remain a vital factor in French village life: State teacher and priest fighting over the village urchin, the latter denouncing the former's "godless" school-books,

the former reporting on the latter's school-books "traducing the Republic and garbling the history of France," State school and Church school in furious competition and the latter generally winning in the long run. The anti-clerical peasant will quite well send his two or three children to the Church school—and go on voting for the anti-clerical Socialist Radical Member of Parliament.

A fair land, rich, bright to the eye, but mellow-coloured in soft tones, grand and wild here and there, but for the most part subdued, graceful, well trimmed and well bred and the best cultivated in Europe; a people of peasants who own the fields they till; scattered among them, remnants of feudal nobles and a small people of tiny squires whom upheavals spared—*hober-eaux*, more peasants themselves than squires, yet not quite peasants; and planted upon the lot the new-comers, the outsiders, from the retired town grocer in his hideous villa, the most hideous of all villas in all European villadom, to the financial king who bought a château built between the ages of Francis I and Louis XIV and its furniture and tapestries and ancestors for what was to him a song; on the land, the splendour of scores of priceless cathedrals and thousands of exquisite grey stone churches, most of which the un-Christian State keeps in repair, and the polished beauty of hundreds of palaces, castles, and manors, most of them national monuments in the State's sole care. How will this French soil change?

Nationalisation of the land is an article of

most kinds of Socialistic faith. It may be put into practice somewhere, not in France, unless France undergoes a greater change than that of the First French Revolution. The French Parliamentary Unified Socialist party proposing nationalisation of the land to the French peasant owner would raise a Homeric laugh, or perhaps a more bitter kind of guffaw, throughout the countryside. The French peasant will not share a field or a cow with his own brother by blood; any communism, any common ownership of fields and kine by him and his brother villagers he would call a grim joke. Sympathy which every social thinker must feel with theories for the nationalisation of means of production always knocks up against the doubt which, if he has thought sufficiently, he must also entertain, whether man be not a born owner who must have some things of his very own. If French agriculture is the best argument against Free Trade, the French peasant is the best evidence that, as the child will have a toy of his very own, man will not be taught not to desire possession. The last man in the world to give up his own little corner of the earth to a community of which he would be one will be the French peasant. William Morris's *News from Nowhere* is an often great and beautiful dream, the only beautiful one of its kind transcribed; knowledge of the French peasantry shatters it, and I have often wondered what Morris would have answered, if (in a moment when he chose to argue the subject) one had met him merely with the French peasant.



No shadow of belief in any form of Socialism, probably no comprehension of what any Socialism means, has entered the French peasant's head. There was from the first no chance in modern times that any should. Only wage-earning farm-hands and labourers, discontented, and sufficiently discontented, numerous, and energetic to organise, could spread any sort of Socialism in the French countryside. The handful of wage-earners in the French rural population, and no more discontented, perhaps rather less, than their fellows in other countries, could hardly, if they got together, disturb half a dozen villages. I know, and every student of France knows, hundreds and thousands of villages, in the most prosperous parts of the French countryside, which do not contain one single mere wage-earning field-worker owning nothing. In districts where solely hired labour without property exists on the land, it is generally that either of imported Belgians or Italians, or of nomadic French waifs and strays, or of French peasants who through ill-luck or bad management have lost what they had, but who at one time did have something. If Socialist or Trade Union organisation be almost unknown in the rural population of England, where the land belongs to the few and where the peasant owning the land he tills is an extraordinary exception, it is still more unlikely in France, where the peasant who does not own the land he tills is the exception. In observations spreading over many years, I have kept note of one, and only one, strike of French agricultural labourers,

towards 1905, and that after a few days was heard of no more. No Trade Unions or even organisations of any kind are recorded to exist among mere wage-earning agricultural labourers in France. The only important “agricultural syndicates” are precisely groups of peasant land-owners, very practical, useful, enterprising co-operative bodies, working together for the better development of their properties and the better distribution of their produce; no syndicates could be more averse from what has been called “Syndicalism.”

In modern France no “labour movement” has been known among the peasantry. The “Wine War” of 1907 in the south seemed likely to make a revolution. It would have been a revolution of those who own the earth because they could not make enough out of the earth, of wine-growers because in that year they could not sell their wine. That wonderful march, when a hundred thousand men (it was a southern estimate of numbers, but it was a wonderful march all the same) started from the vineyards north of the Pyrenees to tramp their wrongs across France if needs were, would have been an invasion of little landlords, each one of whom had owned his vines from father to son, and, though all stood and tramped together, no prophet meeting them to speak of communism and nationalisation of vineyards would have been welcome. The Parliamentary Unified Socialist party from the safe distance of Paris did speak, but no member ventured down to the midst of the furious little landlords who could not sell

their wine that year. M. Clemenceau judged the Wine War well; it was no revolution springing from any of the deep causes that may change society.<sup>1</sup>

The French peasant, owning the French soil, has no conflict with employers, almost none with the dying squires, with the *hobereau*, the small country-gentleman, all but a peasant like himself, is the enemy only of the bourgeois of the towns, the intruder in the countryside, whom he dislikes much more with a natural dislike of the country for the town than for any class jealousy, whom he looks down upon more than dislikes, and out of whom he makes as much as he can. Conflicts between peasant owners and peasant wage-earners are for the present negligible and will continue so, unless the peasant owning class dwindles and the soil is gathered up into fewer hands, of which there is no sign. The future, the distant future, of the French country holds perhaps a different and greater conflict. There are no signs of it yet, no social signs at least, and only psychological and vague. But a conflict of the kind would be ultimately logical.

The French peasant owns and clings to ownership, one may say desperately. He not only must hold aloof from all schemes for a social change towards common ownership of land, but

<sup>1</sup> He enticed the leader, Marcellin Albert, the hero of a day, to his Prime Minister's study, kept him ten minutes, gave him 100 francs, and the revolt was broken, being no stronger than a small trick of cynical statesmanship. Albert, when he got back, was nearly stoned for taking the bribe.

may eventually be driven by events to take his stand strongly against schemes for the common ownership of any or everything. It is not at all unthinkable that industrial, wage-earning France may some day unite to claim some such social change and unite strongly enough to put the claim strongly; the day is far from come, but it may come. If it does, on which "side of the barricade"—in political French imagery bred by many revolutions, and lastly the Commune of 1871—will the French peasantry stand? Certainly not on the side of common ownership, and certainly on that of distinct and jealous "mine and thine." If the great social war ever come in France, we shall expect to find capital and labour arrayed against one another, and—as wherever the war breaks out—those who own or have earned and who pay, and those who earn and are paid, against one another; a simpler war, perhaps, than political economists may think. But in France at least, and perhaps in France alone in the world, there will be this subtle complication: the peasantry will be all on the side of ownership, the soil will be on the side of capital. If the war comes, and in this country, one may imagine a division of social forces unknown in history before: on one side, the huge army of those who labour and make and have lacked either the chance or the strength to own what they laboured for and what they made, and, on the other, the owners, the employers, the financiers, the hereditary landlord, and with them the huge army of peasants to whom the soil belongs. The peasant has in-



comparably less knowledge of this world of to-day than the factory worker, and in the latter's world is as obtuse as the latter is sharp ; nor in his own world would he turn the tables easily. But he has one incomparable mastery over the worker of the towns : he *is* a master, the master of his own field ; for that he despises the worker whose ready cash is twice his. For that he will take sides not for but against the worker of the towns, and for that he will make the great social war, when it comes, different in France from what it will be everywhere else. One wonders precisely whether he may not prevent it from coming in France at all. "C'est un très grand honneur de posséder un champ," wrote Charles de Pomairols, poet and *hobereau*.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CITIES

THERE are many Parises, and there are a great many cities in France that are not Paris. Let me try to enumerate the Parises there are. The tourists' Paris that everybody knows; the American Champs Élysées Paris which has succeeded the Faubourg St. Honoré Paris of the old days when there was still a British colony in Paris; the westward Paris where the Parisians live; the Paris of the boulevards, still surviving from the Vaudeville to the Madeleine; the Paris that works and sometimes slaves ("vieillard laborieux," Paris was called by Baudelaire) east of thence, and north and south too; the particular working Paris that makes money, just east of the Opera in the dense corner where the Bourse and wholesale trades are; the old and stately Paris where the Boulevard St. Germain was threescore years ago driven through estates and has left from time to time a sleepy, comely mansion on either side of it; the Paris of the Boul' Miche, where there once was a Latin Quarter; the American Paris of Montparnasse; the Parises of Belleville and Menilmontant and the Buttes Chaumont and Montrouge, which are

another world, here and there often squalid, sometimes charming, little worlds of their own.

It is a great voyage of discovery through Paris, in space and in time. The distances are short, but sometimes in fifty yards one can step from one world into another; some worlds of Paris it takes ten or twenty years, or perhaps a lifetime, to get into. A day and a night are enough for knowing the face Paris shows to outsiders. Boulevard cafés, where all are welcome and the new-comer can sit down at the next table to that of the *habitué* of twenty years (not at his table, though) can teach something of Paris life and Parisian talk in half an hour. The boulevards, busy and loitering, feverish and lazy, full of mad traffic beneath green trees; the Rue de Rivoli, tin-pot shops under stately archways; the Rue de la Paix, diamonds and motor-cars; the Tuileries, quaint, sharp French children playing, or neat, perky shop-girls lunching beneath sedate and trimmed limes and planes that have seen so much history; the Place de la Concorde and the Champs Élysées, pattern of well-planned urban landscapes,—all these speak to the eye at once. That Paris can be understood in an afternoon; she laid herself out to be known in an afternoon, and that is one virtue of Paris. She always has a welcome, a spacious, pleasant, well-managed welcome, for the stranger; she keeps a great deal of herself to herself, but there is always a smile for the stranger, a stately and a sly smile—the Champs Élysées and Montmartre. One night of Montmartre supper places and dancing-rooms teaches all there is to be known of them.

Every one is welcome : the respectable, elderly French lady wearing a paper fool's-cap on Christmas Eve, the American ladies come to look on and see life, the French Senator still gay, the American husband trying to be gay, the smart gay ladies, the girls who would like to be smart, the shady men, the adventurer, the bully, the tout. In twenty-four hours the tourist has learnt his day-and-night Paris.

A night Paris that the rest of Paris has only heard about. I wish I could get statistics of the proportionate number of Parisians who have never been to Montmartre. Many an English, American, or other tourist is infinitely better acquainted with the Rat Mort, the Abbaye, the Rabelais, the Royal, the Monico, than any Parisian, and could go thither blindfold from the Gare du Nord or the Gare St. Lazare, whereas the Parisian who lives a quarter of a mile or a hundred yards away would feel and look an awkward stranger in these "Parisian" haunts. To countless Paris families that live and have lived for generations at Passy, round the Parc Monceau, even in Montmartre, nocturnal Montmartre is an undiscovered, a sort of mythical country. A gay young son here and there has dared to explore it when he had extra pocket-money. The family thought him a sad dog, and lets him keep his knowledge to himself. Nothing is funnier than to bring suddenly into a real Parisian family an old Paris-beaten tourist who knows his outside Paris by heart; the astonishment of the old "Parisian" tourist when he finds all his pet Paris landmarks of



twenty years unknown to the family, and the family looks blank at his best jokes and anecdotes about this famous waiter and that picturesque café; the bewilderment of the family to find that it was expected to know all this, and that this is the Paris, and all the Paris, the visitor of twenty years knows.

The family does not know very much more about the Champs Élysées Paris, which is American and cosmopolitan, as in the old days (historians relate) the Faubourg St. Honoré Paris, round the British Embassy, that has not indeed strayed from its staid though once (in the earlier times of Pauline Borghese) wanton abode, was English and cosmopolitan. Not one resident in ten in the Champs Élysées or thereabouts is Parisian or even French. Most of the pseudo-American hotels, which gave the Champs Élysées their new character and turned them from an avenue into a gay tango place, are or were Boche. At the hotel teas, afternoon teas and night teas, most Parisian families would feel strangers in a strange land. American families frequent them to learn French life.

Like all European cities, Paris moves westwards. At the end of last century the Champs Élysées had not a shop, a restaurant, or an hotel. Under the Second Empire boulevardiers lived and talked and settled the world's affairs with a Parisianism on the boulevards towards the Faubourg Montmartre. Before the end of the century every boulevardier had ceased going as far east as the Faubourg Montmartre, and Tor-toni's, once the café heart of Paris, had become

a boot-shop. To-day the boulevards, several miles long, begin only at their end just before the Opera. Nothing east of that counts for the boulevardier. The boulevardier himself, indeed, is dying out, like his boulevards. The name itself is already extinct, and the Parisian family would be surprised to hear it still spoken; but the thing does still exist. There still are boulevardiers, though none owns now to the name. They are theatre people, noblemen, journalists, writers, cinema people, people with nothing in particular to do except to know what is going on. They meet in one particular café at 5 p.m. Some live in successive cafés with clockwork regularity; in one from eleven to lunch-time, in another from two to four, in a third from five to seven. This is the old and scarce type of Parisian that knows no family life and whom the Parisian family does not know.

The commoner species of boulevardier extant lives with his family except from five to seven, when he is at his café. There he sees friends, does business, cultivates acquaintanceships over strange and generally mild mixed drinks in the midst of a whirl of waiters and glasses and babble that would distract any but a Parisian. On the corner of a table a stockbroker will be transacting a business deal of millions. At the other end of the same table a playwright and a composer are planning an operetta. Close by, a Deputy has just come from the last Chamber debate and argues with a Minister's private secretary. An English and an American journalist are listening to an old Turk's tales, fre-

quently interrupted by those of an Armenian and a Greek. A decayed marquis, turned cinema agent, is surrounded by acrobats, male and female, all eager to "turn," to whom he gives audience regularly at his café table, and remains the perfect old-world gentleman in the midst of his curious company and new occupations. Actresses flit in and out, waiters dash hither and thither. A glass is served here, another upset there, a table wiped with a napkin elsewhere. And in the midst of it all stockbroker, playwright, cinema agent, journalist, acrobat, each gets miraculously through with his business. This is boulevardier Paris, what is left of it; three, at most four, cafés remain on the boulevards that can call themselves Parisian.

A stone's-throw from this Paris that works gaily, and does get through quite a surprising amount of work in its own way, one can see another aspect of Baudelaire's Paris, "*vieillard laborieux*": the markets, whither, at the hour when supper-parties are starting oysters, carts scarlet with carrots and green with cabbages and trains laden with fish and flesh bring food to what Zola, in one of his best gross pictures, called the *Ventre de Paris*; the Bourse, screaming up to 3 p.m. right out into the street with money asked for and offered; the *Rue du Sentier*, where beads and feathers and buttons and sample fashion-colour cards and a hundred articles of dress keep millions of money in circulation and feed thousands of men and women. Nearer the hem of Paris, Belleville, La Villette, Charonne, Ménilmontant, Montrouge, are the Paris that in

days of revolution poured down its angry sons, and daughters too, to set up barricades in the heart of the city, that in days of law and order sends them to the centre for their daily labour, and that in war sent most of the army of Paris to the front. This fringe has curious little worlds of its own. Workmen's dwellings, sometimes squalid, sometimes patterns of deft and neat thrift, lie up to quaint little living-places of the *petite bourgeoisie* that peacefully passes its days on tiny incomes, admirably content. The hulking, skilled blacksmith, open-handed, open-hearted, rich in his world, good father, good, honest, masterful husband, ready to make political revolutions whenever need be ; the little, careful, habit-loving, mouse-like, pattering retired clerk who is ending his days self-sufficiently at Montrouge,—they are the two ends of this Paris.

The streets of Paris are like wayward rivers that go their gait, leaving backwaters from each bank in their course, and one still place does not know another. The Boulevard St. Germain leaves islets where eighteenth-century houses remain and where the last old gentlemen and dowagers of ancient families sit sunning themselves of a fine afternoon in what they have kept of the courtyard and garden of their mansion *entre cour et jardin*, and whence twice or thrice a week (I have watched them do it) they drive forth in the family coach shaking on its springs. Next door is a modern workmen's dwelling, next door but one a literary Bohemian café, opposite brand-new flats just built ; and new-flats, literary



café, workmen's dwellings, and ancient mansion have no knowledge of one another's existence.

The Rue de Rivoli leaves on its north bank some of the most ancient landmarks and the greatest architectural beauties of Paris, seventeenth-century palaces with wrought-iron sculptures and frescoes, become almost slums, but in some the porter sells picture postcards. Otherwise the little side-streets are unconscious. The Boulevard St. Michel, the Boul' Miche, crossing the Boulevard St. Germain, dashes in a straight line through the old network of little streets on the left bank of the Seine. It leaves unvisited unknown hovels, some of the worst of Paris, here and there on each side of it. It does not even know itself; flats in the Boulevard St. Michel are lived in by families who go to bed at ten, and to whom the Latin Quarter, just downstairs, is an unknown country. Worse than that; the Latin Quarter itself does not know itself or know how it has changed, how bourgeois Bohemia has become, that most of the students who keep Latin Bohemia up are not French, and that (mournful to old students) when the Latin Quarter really wants to amuse itself it has to go to Montmartre. The Boulevard Montparnasse, crossing the Boulevard St. Michel, washes many a café known to Americans. Some of the cafés are known only to Americans. The boulevard leaves on each side many curious little worlds which these cafés know not of: Russian, Polish, Jewish, Armenian gathering-places, but chief the little centres of French life, working, basking, just living life, that go on in

the midst of the Bohemian American colony and know not a jot of it, and which it never learns to know.

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This diverse, ancient, live Paris, not at all easy to know really, faced war once more. One heard the guns on September 4, 1914, one had the bombs from Tauben and Zeppelins before and after. In July 1914 frivolous Paris was at its best. In June on the day of one of the most brilliant Grand Prix Races at Longchamps, one heard of the murder of the Austrian heir and his wife. One rushed from the races to a tango tea. The Paris season was a wild whirl. It was the most brilliant and feverish season ever known. A mad season. Society had to go to *Parsifal* in French, to *Tristan* in German, to Russian ballets, to Italian operas in Italian, to Russian operas in Russian in a German theatre in the Champs Élysées, to dancing lessons, to masked balls, to "head" balls, to "feet" balls, to balls where the greatest Parisian ladies undressed as Sultan's favourites, and were delighted to get their coloured photographs into illustrated papers. Nothing was too absurd; dowagers were proud to learn new posturings from South American dancing-masters, and every woman with taste had to dye her hair blue.

One week saw a new Paris. It was not a new France, but it did seem a new Paris. No one knowing France doubted her; even those knowing Paris best were not quite sure of her. It had been such a wild, thoughtless, also Boche-ridden

Paris up to the last minute; a Paris, the old wiseacres said, only too like the Paris of 1869, a wilder Paris indeed, if comparisons be true, and also much more Boche-ridden. It was a new, very quiet and resolved Paris, a Paris also rid, as far as could be, of her Boches. I saw many of them going, hectoring it up to the last train that left the Gare du Nord for Berlin, obvious Prussian officers whom one had known as café waiters, hotel managers who had secured the best sites in Paris, the lawn tennis pro. of my little club in the Bois de Boulogne, who had all the looks of a Prussian N.C.O. and was proved a spy and was, I hope and believe, shot. Paris was not rid throughout the war of the spyings in which Germany has by universal consent passed mistress, but in the first days Paris thought she was, and she shook herself free.

Free in a great cause. Who did not know Paris during the war does not know Paris. The enemy patiently at regular intervals announced revolutions in Paris, Poincaré assassinated and new *pétroleuses* at work. One was amused for some time, and bought the Swiss papers steadily on the boulevards to read quotations from the latest German press "special correspondence from Paris." Finally the joke palled, the enemy had overreached himself so absurdly at his own game. "Such slight disturbances," said a German official speaking for publication of food troubles in Berlin, "naturally will occur in great cities like Berlin, as in London or in Paris." This did revive for a day one's amusement in German news. The German spy who discovered

stop-the-war ferment in London or in Paris deserves the Iron Cross in diamonds.

War Paris those who knew it will never forget. "Let us hope the civilians will stick it," said the text of the now most famous cartoon Forain ever drew<sup>1</sup>; and they did. Fathers, mothers, wives, were heroes and heroines also in their way. From the former Prime Minister and from the charwoman round the corner, who both lost their eldest sons, I heard grief, not complaint. The statesman thenceforward did what he could by speech and action to help his country to win the war, the workwoman in black went on with her work quietly. She had to go on with her work to live, but by the nobly simple way she did it she also helped her country. All Paris took its share quite simply. After months and months or war not a murmur, not a grumble. The worst I ever heard was in 1916: "Don't you think it ought to be over this year?"

The great do not need or want praise of what they did; women nursing, palaces become hospitals, refugees cared for, Belgian and Serbian children homed and mothered. Humbler folk did more; they stood fast and did not wince. The wife, her husband at the front, the mother, her sons at the front, both suddenly thrown on their own resources (only the former with an allowance from the State) going day by day quietly to market, where all prices rose steadily, buying coals, food, all necessities in always smaller quantities and daily dearer, living still

<sup>1</sup> One soldier in the trenches to another: "Pourvu qu'ils tiennent." "Qui ça?" "Les Civils."



bravely and silently their small lives through every hardship—these really were the soul of war Paris. Enough can never be said of the noiseless courage of working Paris in the war. Not a murmur was heard anywhere, though the hardships were great. Who could have blamed young widows, old mothers clamouring for peace? Not a woman of Paris asked for any peace but the right peace. They “stuck it” indeed; they had not stopped to think much about it, they understood. The will to win—it was finally in the women of Paris and of France that it lay. Probably no national armies of men can ever win unless the women behind want them to. Behind the soldiers of France were their staunch wives and mothers. The humblest market woman also fought the battle, because she was patient and brave.

There were, of course, some flaws and shortcomings in war Paris. The army contractor, who, rubbing his hands, said in my hearing, “This war is a godsend to me,” may be made to disgorge a trifle later on. The pessimist who buttonholed you with sinister news generally fled to Bordeaux and stopped there. One terror was bred by the war—the person having access to special sources of information. He revived the days before a public Press, in the seventeenth century, when in the Palais-Royal half a dozen men who absolutely did know what was going on would spread the news of a morning for all Paris to repeat in the afternoon. The Press being under military (and political) censorship, the *monsieur bien informé* (he was early in the

war known thus) rioted to his heart's content. He was virulent in boulevard cafés and other such-like public places. He came in, secrets bursting out all over his face, and at the first word said, “Now, this is not hearsay, I *know*—Joffre—Briand—the Kaiser—Japan—the new flank attack.” It required really more stamina in Parisians to bear with the person whose sources of information were unimpeachable than with any other minor curse of war-time. The plague was more innocent in streets and workshops, where the brother-in-law of a concierge, because the concierge had among her tenants the sister of a lamp-cleaner at the War Office, knew positively. . . . It was really a plague among the “*Tout Paris*,” where the guileless man who admitted he did not know coming events was instantly the victim of the man who said he knew.

The “well-informed circles” of Paris, beloved of journalists, were not the soundest or even the best-informed. One had to fall back once more upon the people, in whom nervousness and curiosity in the most critical moments never went below the surface. If Paris never flinched, it was to her working people, her little bourgeoisie, her old artisans, her plebeian women finally, that she owed it. A word must be said too of her fringe, that of those who amused her in peace time. The little, and large, world of the stage, of all stages from the opera to cinemas, suffered greatly and suffered in silence, and for many months lived on two 50-centime meals (sometimes only one) a day, and those only

through charitable professional good-fellowship. Theatres shyly reopened and revived old farces, or tried to bring the war into revues, with varying success. Even those little war doings of Paris were not without their bravery. Why not record also the ladies' war fashions? During the war Paris dressmakers and milliners revolutionised the gowns and hats that Parisian women and women all over the world (including, they say, Berlin) wore. The French soldier back from a year in the trenches, meeting his wife, said, "Hullo, I had forgotten this was carnival." The equanimity with which Paris in the midst of war invented fashions of flowerpot and trench helmet hats and baby frocks for women of all ages and imposed them upon the world, even upon enemies, was also typical of Paris.

A brave, quiet, tenacious Paris, by whose dogged spirit the Boches must have been surprised as much as by the battle of the Marne; a Paris that bore griefs and faced Zeppelins unflinchingly. In a little café I frequented the old waiter came up to me: "We have just lost our eldest son, Monsieur. He was killed outright in the trenches at Soissons." I then saw that his employer, the café owner, was in black. I shook hands with him, and the other customers did. That was all, and all the humble people of Paris bore the loss of their sons with the same courage, almost without tears, but with an ever-deepening hatred for the enemy that will not die out for generations. When Tauben and Zeppelins came and dropped futile bombs they amused Paris. When they came back with other bombs

and slaughtered work-women, elderly workmen, and babies, Paris was roused, not to fear, but to a fury that will never in this age forgive or forget.

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The cities of France are not only Paris, and are not all smaller Parises. France is the most centralised Great Power in Europe ; Paris is the heart and brain of the country more than the capital of any other country is, and every Frenchman talks of “ Paris and la province.” All the same, the old provincial towns remain, many with their own peculiar character unchanged, many with the air still of smaller capitals, with their own habits and ways of thought. The expert Parisian (few, if any, foreigners ever attain to the knowledge) can tell not only a Marseillais, a Bordelais (comparatively easy, this), but also (which is much subtler) a Toulousain, a Nîmois, a Poitevin, a Tourangeau, a Rouennais, a Rémois, a Lillois by his speech, manners, and frame of mind.

The delightful Marseillais, “ Marius ” of the Cannebière, is known of course the world over, childlike, noisy as ten Northerners, impossible to take seriously, canny all the same. Rich Bordeaux, the aristocrat of trading cities, the town of the *grands seigneurs* of wine, with some stately streets of eighteenth-century houses, has a southern speech different from the speech of Marseilles, knows more about good feeding than any other town in the world, is more closely in touch with England than Paris or any other



French town, takes a sincere delight in its own particularly wet winters, and generally enjoys its food, its wines, and life easily : “ *You are having a war up there, aren’t you ?* ” a Bordelais merchant greeted me with, when I went to Bordeaux with the French Government in September 1914. Classic Toulouse is a modern political town, divided between Radical caucuses and militant Roman Catholicism. Nîmes and Montpellier are the towns of France where the wars of religion are still remembered. Busy, bourgeois, democratic Lyons has an accent of its own (subtle to detect, but experts hear it), and the Lyonnais is reputed a good talker with a good opinion of himself. In Poitiers, with its extraordinary cathedral, the “ good families ” never open the shutters of their windows on the street, mix only with other good families known to them for four generations, and have never been heard to welcome a stranger. Tours, whither the young Englishman is rightly sent to learn the best French, is the treasure-house of French traditions of sanity and life, and considers modern Paris upstart and bad form. Rouen, beautiful Rouen, possesses one of the most stiffly starched social sets in France, terrifying to the newcomer, and (an hour and a half by rail from Paris) looks upon Paris as a far-off, bad world, which reprehensible Rouennais husbands slip away to for a day. Reims, martyred Reims, with also (experts say) a French accent of its own, is the second aristocrat of French trading cities after Bordeaux, but with a sterner spirit, being always in a place of honour when France

is attacked, and at the same time as traditional as Tours, but gayer, and still nobly gay under German shells. Lille (still captive as I write) is the Lyons of the north, busy and prosperous, but really of the north, quiet, with broad slow speech, and is also, like Toulouse, a political town, but in a different way, divided between the Roman Catholic conservatism of many ruling families and the advanced Socialism of the bulk of the workmen they employ. Nancy, inviolate Nancy, with its splendid Place Stanislas, the old capital of the Dukes of Lorraine, but French now as perhaps no French town is French, is the outpost on the border. Every Lorrain feels that, and little else counts. He is the soldier at the frontier, and the little political bickerings of Toulouse filtered through to him matter very little when they reach him.

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I was in Nancy while she was threatened (she always was during the war) and Nancy till 8 p.m. under Tauben, and a few miles from the front, was gayer than Paris. The women marketing and bargaining, the young mothers with their children in the squares, the Tout Nancy laughing at cafés, brought one's heart into one's throat. I was in Bordeaux also, easy-going Bordeaux, not threatened at all, thanks to the British Fleet. The difference was great, but it finally was only a difference of degree. Every city of France, with different temperament, was of the same mind. Some suffered more, but all suffered; some saw at closer quarters the thing that had

to be done, but all saw it had to be done. Bordeaux and Marseilles did not lose fewer sons fighting than Nancy. In gay Bordeaux was many a bereaved family, and there were sons and brothers bent on revenge. An Army Corps from pleasant Provence, the 15th, at the beginning of the war failed and was disgraced; formed again and sent back to fight in the "unhealthiest" places, it was redeemed by terrible losses. "What a war you have on up there!" said jocular Bordeaux; but she sent her sons too. Every city and hamlet and village of France sent its sons, and each mourns some of them. Every town and village fought for the one France.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MEN AND WOMEN

SHOWN some of the earlier chapters of this volume, a candid American critic said: "I am quite ready to admire French wit, French vivacity, French thrift, French solidity, French love of beauty, but I draw the line at admiring French rottenness." Shown the same chapters, a candid French critic said: "Why do you deny us poetry? Even you are so English still that you can't rid yourself of the sentimental way of looking at the world. You can't help thinking us hard because we are not soft. Do you think, because our bourgeoisie builds up its families in a businesslike way, the French family has any less sentiment than others? The old English hypocrisy." I told the first critic I hoped I was no apologist of corruption, and the second that I tried not to be a humbug.

French men and French women want studying, like other men and women, perhaps more, though I am not sure that English men and English women do not want quite as much. Like other men and women also, they might do worse than learn to know themselves more. I fancy their self-knowledge is better than that



of many other nations ; but it is from the inside, and they have no notion of seeing themselves as others see them.

Some of the others (including, no doubt, my candid American critic) see the relation of French men and women something after this manner. The man is a polished debauchee from the age of seventeen. The girl makes a marriage of convenience, and a year or two later takes on a lover. Husbands, lovers, wives, mistresses, and independent ladies, who are not married but are otherwise as bad as the wives, spent four or five nights a week in parties at all-night cafés, drinking champagne and looking on at or joining in lascivious dances and go rollicking to bed after sunrise. There are no homes. Life is spent at cafés and restaurants, at improper plays, at more cafés. The one pale-faced, fractious child of a Parisian couple is put out to nurse till old enough to go out on his own to Montmartre. Over all this is laid an only too pleasant veneer that beguiles ; beneath it is rottenness.

Many French families see themselves something after this manner. Let us first of all beware of outsiders, for ours is the real ark. Can we ever be sure of the chastity of a woman who is not of French blood, French bred, with our old traditions in the marrow of her bones ? The English girl ? Sweet, charming, but—those flirtations ! The American girl ? So delightfully vivacious, such a change from our quiet girls, but—that freedom, that self-centredness ! How about her when married ? Simultaneously, can we ever be sure that a foreigner will make

a decent husband? *Chic*, distinguished, or enterprising, go-ahead, money-making, they are indeed. But the real domestic qualities, those that make a safe husband, a good father, the solid head of a house—can we be sure of finding them in a man who, through no fault of his own of course, has never learnt at the French hearth to look at life seriously? Let us, after all, keep to ourselves. We may not be as adventurous, as picturesque as other peoples. But we are content to go on leading our old-fashioned, quiet lives. The foreigners who come to see us amuse us a great deal. For the serious things of life, for the duties of husband and wife and parents, for the family virtues, we prefer to stick to our own simple traditions. Sometimes we go to a café, and the foreigners' vivacious manners there divert us of an evening. But afterwards we are glad to get back to our own quiet, plain French home.

This French home would surprise the outsider exceedingly if he ever got into it. If the foreigner has lived ten years in France he may begin to hope one day that he will be allowed over the threshold. He then will be even more surprised to find that it is he who is looked upon as the dangerous amoralist, the wolf in the French fold. The real French family never for an instant doubts that it alone sets the standard of honest, pure, and wise living, and that there is always some suspicion of unwholesomeness or folly in the common lives of other peoples. In its turn it would be amazed to incredulity by the outsider's exactly contrary idea. "Night life,

amours, Montmartre, faithless wives, callous mothers? My *dear* sir, that is not France. We are France. That is no more France than the toadstools are the forest. We are the trees. If you see only the toadstools—good day.”

The French undoubtedly are even more incapable than other peoples of seeing themselves from the outside. They have long thought out, more reflectively than other peoples, their own idea of themselves; it has not occurred to them to consider what other peoples think of them. The English people has not troubled itself much about the astonishing contradiction it offers to the world, such as that between its bovine matter-of-factness and the poetry of its Ariels. French men and women, on the narrower plane of common life, have perhaps never stopped to turn round and look at the contradictions which they exhibit to the bewildered, ingenuous stranger. They have never asked themselves whether he was simple enough to take the tales of Maupassant for pictures of the French family or to suppose that families admiring the artist who wrote *La Maison Tellier* therefore turned their homes into disorderly houses. It has never occurred to them that when he watches French fathers and mothers and sons rolling with laughter at farces almost worthy of Congreve and Wycherley, he may picture sons and mothers and fathers reproducing the farces in their home life. It has never dawned upon them that the modern world does not understand their division of ordinary common life into closed compartments, a division well under-

stood by eighteenth-century Europe generally and England in particular.

On the stage a farce "fit to make an ape blush"; in the audience French husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, married daughters, and an English father, mother, and daughter long settled in Paris; I saw the sight. The French families enjoying themselves without a shade of self-consciousness; the English mother and daughter, both Parisianised, rocking with laughter; the English father, newer to Paris, the picture of shyness. I felt for him, and a little with him. If his wife and daughter had not been there he would have roared with the rest. He had not yet learnt to put up the French compartments in every-day life. Among the French audience was a family I knew, of strict, almost puritanical way of living. The farce passed off it like water off a duck's back. If one had asked the French father whether such a farce might not harm morals, he would have been deeply insulted. What had the one to do with the other? Would the moral life of a family depend upon a farce? Did a little innocent amusement ever hurt anybody? And the family, after a glass of beer in a café, went home. No decent people could have listened to such a play, an outsider might have thought. Only a depraved mind could imagine such a play affecting life, the French father would have replied, had he read the thought.

Several low terms unfit for polite ears in the English and the French languages regularly take the adjective "French" in the former and



“Anglais” in the latter. Even the study of gutter slang might thus give sharp glimpses of the comparative psychology of peoples.

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If one try to get at the truth of the relations between French men and women, considered at once apart from the contradictions in French society and the ignorant prejudices of outsiders, what foremost traits will one finally find? One of the first, I think, is the greater hold of woman over man in this than in many other peoples. The slave to woman is probably more often French than even Italian. The tempestuous petticoat, though an English poet spoke of it, has probably a more Gallic than any other rule. The argument put frankly, sex is powerful over Frenchmen. Italians flare up with sudden, sometimes murderous flames of passion. Spaniards solemnly or furiously cultivate a sort of formal worship of women. Feminine fascination over Frenchmen is as strong while it lasts, and is more lasting. There are real Circes for Frenchmen, men who throw over honoured wife, adored children, slowly won and carefully kept position, for a woman, who peculate, steal, disgrace themselves for a woman. The thing happens everywhere, but perhaps more often in this people, and more dramatically. Elsewhere the susceptible man is most often that only. In England, at least, he is as a rule a detached man, and, when bewitched, he has only himself to be sorry for. Circe charming the steady French *père de famille* is much more potent. Every

French wife, workman's wife or wife of a bourgeois, always keeps a sharp look out, knowing “what men are.” In the working classes there are constant little comedies, and some almost sublime. I remember one of each kind. The husband, after a tiff, had gone out on his own on Saturday night. The wife, dressed in her best and (having, of course, at least half the week's pay, besides what she had of her own, being a French wife) went to the same café, sat at the other end, and ordered dinner. The husband was with chums and some “ladies.” The wife never saw him or them, but ordered her dinner, oysters, white wine, a nice rabbit stew, cheese, coffee and a liqueur. As she enjoyed her dinner, the husband opposite less and less enjoyed his. At the liqueur he came over to her; she then suddenly recognised him with great surprise—and took him home, she (discreetly) triumphant. Another (or the same) husband went off for a week, and spent three months' pay over the Circe who had netted him. Then he came back, “He came back” (the wife told me) “a sight. He could not look me in the face. His clothes had been torn and not been darned. He had no more money—I had what we had. He had nothing to say for himself. The thought—another woman—disgusted me.” She made a wry face, paused to reflect, then, “Still, I did take him back.” There is no nation in which women are as much world-wiser, steadier, and as much more the force of continuity not variation than men, as the French.

Baudelaire's “astrologues noyés dans les yeux

d'une femme" are Frenchmen. Are Anglo-Saxon men ever as bewitched or as uxorious? For the Circe is by no means never the wife. The American husband is known to be uxorious in his own peculiar way: the kind of American wife who amuses herself expensively in Europe while the husband makes hard money in New York or Chicago is familiar to Londoners and Parisians. You would not catch the French husband's uxoriousness taking the form of keeping his wife in luxury on the other side of an ocean; when he is the devoted husband his wife must keep by him.

Looked at from the woman's point of view, the Frenchman is probably less of a Don Juan than he thinks he is, the Frenchwoman is less fascinated than he imagines. In the main hers is to hold him, not to be held. Sexual influence over her is less than over him, and the wildly or perversely passionate Frenchwoman is more or less of a legendary person. It is a question, indeed (a delicate question) whether the greater slaves to man are not to be found among Anglo-Saxon women. The complete *homme à femmes*, the conquering lady-killer who really is the abject slave of Eve, is French. The woman to whom man is the awful and delightful lord and master is not French. I wonder whether she may not be Anglo-Saxon. The cold and cool Englishwoman is sometimes a fire burning in ice. The women whose lives revolve round a man's life are not often French. To use frank speech, I think that the influence of sex is greater over some Anglo-Saxon women than over any French-

women, while it is in general greater over Frenchmen than over Englishmen or Americans.

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It has been said that Frenchwomen have more head than heart. I do not subscribe to that. But they know what they are about, and one can only admire them for it. They are not only no slaves to sex, though well knowing how to use its weapons, but they are finally the rulers. There is almost certainly no modern society in which woman holds as great a sway as the French. She does not count by the direct power of sex alone; the fascinating Parisienne of newspaper chatter is a very bright, showy, and charming person, but the French business woman is in the background and does the work. She does the work and keeps the books and runs the business in a hundred trades which the general public knows nothing of: the wholesale trades that supply millinery and dress-making with feathers, ribbons, furs, stuffs, buttons, lace, and the innumerable feeding industries for the business of clothing men and women; other and various businesses in which she is the accountant and often the head cashier; cafés and restaurants in which she alone keeps all the accounts minute by minute. I know many business houses in Paris in which the wife is the head partner; she brought, let us say, two-thirds of the capital, she finally directs the business; the husband, who brought the remaining third, goes out and fetches back what he can to the hive, where she is the queen, though he no drone—she sees to that.



The power of the Church is one proof of the power of women in France. It depends almost solely upon the women. Hardly one anti-clerical politician whose wife is not pious. A famous crisis occurred when Mme Jaurès insisted that her daughter should be confirmed; the Socialist leader of course gave way and went on preaching against the Church, while his wife listened to the priest's sermons and prayed for her husband's salvation; husband and wife remained, of course, devoted to one another. Men disestablish the Churches, attack the Churches; families, led by the mother, keep the Churches fast, and in the end men make laws but the women keep customs which are stronger. Votes for women the world over would no doubt preserve, not upset; they would certainly make for conservatism in France. But the women do not ask for the vote, they have the power already. The vote is a narrow sovereignty for which they might sacrifice a broader, deeper human sway. Also, by the way, the number of males about equals that of females in France, which perhaps is another reason why there are no French suffragettes to speak of.

The co-operation of woman in the world of work, especially small and medium trade, and even sometimes great trade,<sup>1</sup> is certainly larger in France than in most other nations. How stronger custom is than law is shown by French law. It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the French wage-earning

<sup>1</sup> One of the biggest shops in the world was run for years by a Frenchwoman—the Bon Marché in Paris by Mme Boucicaut.

married woman obtained from Parliament ownership of her own earnings; before then her earnings had to be paid by the employer to the husband if the latter claimed them. To this day there is no French Married Women's Property Act, as regards property distinct from salary or wages.<sup>1</sup> Unless judicial separation in certain forms, not necessarily leading to divorce, has intervened, the husband is sole administrator of his wife's property, and she actually cannot open a banking account, or if she does her cheques are worthless unless endorsed also by him. Held in bondage by law the French wife rules by custom, and for one Englishwoman who has her own banking account and no knowledge whatever of her husband's business, there are two Frenchwomen who are content not to be able to draw a franc without their husband's consent, because they manage most of their husband's business and because the husbands are the figureheads in law but the wives govern in practice.

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The collaborator, the partner, especially when the leading partner, always commands consideration. Woman is looked up to in France as much as in any country and more than in many. Remember that the slave to woman's sex, the *homme à femmes*, pays one kind of perpetual tribute to woman. In societies where men are more sufficient unto themselves and enjoy their

<sup>1</sup> Owing greatly to the opposition of the powerful caste of notaries, who thrive on expensive marriage settlements.

chief pastimes and exchange their best ideas without the presence of women, there are fewer pursuers of woman; but woman is also less thought about. The Frenchman, who thinks about woman probably more than any other man, has more respect for her than most other men. His respect spreads from one pole to another, and can truly be said to include the harlot of a night and his own mother. There is no country where the tie between mother and son is as close and unbreakable, and there is none where the worst debauchee as seldom forgets that the poorest fallen woman still is a woman. In Paris night haunts English, American, Russian, German, South American roysterers may be brutal to a courtesan; the Frenchman almost never, and the woman herself is not cowed as she is often elsewhere, but still keeps some spirit and still stands on some sort of peculiar dignity of her own. Is this dignifying prostitution? You may call it so. But even if a woman be a prostitute, it will be better for her—and for you—to treat her decently.

At the other pole are the French mother and son—the one tie that never snaps. A Frenchman estranged from his mother is called a monster, whatever the mother did; a French mother renouncing her son (infanticide, due to temporarily unbalanced minds in betrayed girls, being left out of account) is unknown. The Frenchwoman who has become a mother is almost always thenceforward mother first and wife afterwards. The transformation is probably rarer in Anglo-Saxon women. Is it a trans-

formation ? The woman more mother than wife was no doubt born so. Not one French mother in ten will sacrifice the children she bore, if the tragic dilemma occur, to the man who begat them. The English wife more often, I think, in such a desperate choice, would choose the man. The Frenchwoman at bay is the lioness with her cubs. The acquired thought of a man and woman companionship, higher (it may be) than the tie of flesh between mother and offspring, is rarely familiar to her. This is more evidence that sex has less hold over the Frenchwoman than French novelists pretend to think, and than over the women of some other peoples. Is there any more tragic figure than the prostitute keeping, with her horrible earnings, a child growing up in a village a long way off whom she visits adoringly once a month ? A too well-known figure in France.

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This should be a tale written by Maupassant. A party of French and English men went to a disorderly house in a little French country town. They were the only visitors. The place seemed to be in subdued excitement, though the rooms were dark and empty. The women turned up the lights, put two sou pieces into mechanical organs, and danced in couples absent-mindedly. The men, no roysterers, stopped the dejected dancing and said : " What is the matter ? Tell us." " Then you have noticed something ? " The women spoke all at once. " Yes, it is true



we are not ourselves to-night. You see, Madame had a new baby this morning, and that has upset us. We were all upstairs looking at the dear little thing. It will go away to-morrow—it can't be kept here, can it?—and we shall never see it again; so we wanted to see all we could of it." Madame was the co-lessee of the disorderly house leased by the municipality according to law to a married couple only. The men shook hands, and went away, thinking.

Some Romantics of the fleshly school sang the harlot till one felt it was time for poets to give the ordinary respectable woman a chance. But no student of the men and women of a nation can afford to ignore the prostitutes—or the bullies. The latter in France can be dismissed in a sentence: there is nothing lower in humanity. Unluckily, they cannot be got rid of as easily in fact. They are the one worst curse of Paris, and a few other large towns of France, Marseilles, Lyons, Bordeaux. Police and legislators<sup>1</sup> strive to stamp them out, but with little apparent success. The women are worth some study. The first thing learned by most students of the subject in France is to take 50 per cent. off the theories of some sentimentalists. The facts are generally now looked in the face, that the proportion of women who were tricked or driven to prostitution and did not

<sup>1</sup> The latter by the law against "vagabondage spécial." The plague has of late grown in London, by the way. Students in Paris did once, towards 1890, make a successful attack upon the vermin. They called no police or authorities for help or by your leave, but suddenly rose and in a night or two had purged the Latin Quarter.

take to it of their own free will is low,<sup>1</sup> that the proportion of those who wish to be or can be reclaimed is about equally low, and that those who do not fall to the lowest degradation neither pity themselves nor are the proper objects of extraordinary pity. Betrayal, violence, temperament are various causes of prostitution in France as elsewhere, but the chief cause, in this country at all events, is economic; not sheer hunger, or seldom, but the unequal distribution of wealth, the increased contact between the rich who are or seem idle and the workers who earn hard livelihoods in modern civilisations, where all classes above the poorest are thrown more and more together, the rapid growth of luxury. In Paris (and as much in London, New York, Berlin) the poorer come nearer the richer to-day than before and can draw comparisons, on which envy feeds. The woman worker in great cities comes hourly across the woman who enjoys with ease all the things beyond anything she reaches by toil. Think, in Paris, of the dress-making girl who works sometimes ten and twelve hours a day (big dress-makers evade laws and labour inspectresses) making such dresses as she would love to wear, sometimes indeed for great ladies of a world she knows to be beyond her ken, but also for *demi-mondaines* who may have come from the very same humble world as she. No woman loves real luxury—not finery, but perfect art of dressing—as the Frenchwoman.

<sup>1</sup> Thus most observers agree now that the so-called White Slave Trade traffics in fewer innocent victims than some well-meaning social reformers imagine.

Girls whose work-day in the Rue de la Paix is an hourly temptation, the *homme à femmes* lurking everywhere, do resist, and one must without Pharisaism call them brave girls; but many give in. Not only girls; love of luxury, devouring covetousness for luxury, the extraordinary growth of luxury, play havoc among some married women of the poorer middle class, and the Paris police reports say that the *petite bourgeoise*, the clerk's wife, the small official's wife, who, while keeping up all the appearances of her home life, sells herself to look like a woman of fashion, is a type on the increase.

The worst of it is that, for the good girls, their virtue is too often their sole reward. Paris affords some shocking comparisons between the *demi-mondaine* who has succeeded at forty and the working woman who at that age must work harder than ever, often for decreasing pay. The comparisons can be made anywhere, but in Paris they seem easier for the good woman to make; she tramps back tired, with tired children and grumpy husband, through the Bois de Boulogne and "Mlle de Bourgogne" (they played together, living in neighbouring house-porters' lodges) drives past from the races in her car, magnificent and respected, in a way, in her own particular set—and the honest woman is only human.

She has her compensations, and (when she has rested) she remembers and holds her head up. I knew an old peasant woman near Paris with two daughters; one had married a penniless, incompetent, journeyman tailor and half

starved; the other had had four lovers and the fifth kept her in comfort and refinement, introducing her to his fellow students, who treated her like a lady. The old mother received the lover politely, but in private poured wrath upon the daughter, and the peasant family was torn by the feud between the girl who had gone straight and the girl who had not. The latter, I heard afterwards, was "made an honest woman of" by a sixth gentleman, and the family is reunited.

The honest woman has compensations; the other one has hers also. There is a particular type in the French *demi-monde* which is almost entirely French: the professional prostitute of hard, bourgeois, business-like temperament. She accepts the life with her eyes open, leads it with care and measure, has no small vices, never drinks, never takes drugs as her wild sisters at Montmartre do, never squanders, but puts money by, and at fifty disappears into piety, respectability, and a tiny provincial town where she lives to her death, a respected Lady Bountiful who plays the Curé at Bézique every Saturday evening, has her pew in church, and on stated Sundays, according to ancient country custom, pays for the *pain béni*—the special milk bread that the priest will bless. It may be cynical to feel dislike for so edifying an end.

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The man and the woman "found a family." The large and ornamental and tattered and soiled and picturesque fringe round French society notwithstanding, the stuff of it, all the same,



is the family thus "founded." The careless observer is hypnotised by the fringe. The French family is so much accustomed to look upon itself as the only sensible and solid family in the world that it is scarcely even aware that such careless observation of France exists, and would be amazed to learn how largely it does exist. The family *is* "founded"—founded is the right word. The eighteenth-century marriage has long since ceased to exist—the girl of seventeen going from a nunnery to the arms of a rake of forty-five—except in melodrama; the French girl of to-day is very nearly as free as the English; the young Frenchman of to-day marries younger than ever. But marriage is still planned, and does not merely happen. Mothers and fathers plan it, the man plans it, the girl discreetly, through her mother, may plan it. All look far ahead, to future means, connexions, position, future prospects for the children not yet born or thought of. It is still a social bargain, the man bringing his position, salary, and connexions, the girl her dowry and the social connexions and influence of her parents, to "found a family." The man seldom, the girl almost never, will throw prudence to the winds and marry heedless of future prospects. Thorough marriages of convenience are probably as rare as in other peoples. Unalloyed love matches are rarer. Romeo and Juliet call this a hard, cruel, and very unsatisfactory way of taking what life has to give. It is a hard way, but is it really cruel or altogether unsatisfactory?

The family is founded. Husband and wife are

still only beginning to learn to know each other. If they had courted for years instead of months, they might be a bit more advanced in the knowledge, but they would be still learning. The family exists—instinctively one tiny community bulwarked against the rest of the world. Barring catastrophes—and they will happen, but some must always happen—the community of interests and social aims combined before the match was made help to keep the home together; they have even been known to keep homes together in extreme cases when hatred had grown up between man and wife. Better such a home be split? Perhaps for the individual, probably not for society.

The divine average concerns us most. A French writer at the antipodes of Walt Whitman, La Rochefoucauld, said that there are happy marriages but no delightful ones. The divine average in French families is the solidest, the most united of families, united to the point of what would be boredom for many English or American families: united in work, in play, innocent even of man's club life, let alone of woman's, scarcely ever parted by travels, by the drifting apart of sons and daughters, keeping together in grandchildren and great-grandchildren, peopling some little seaside resorts that I know summer after summer with generation after generation in patriarchal continuity. What about Man and Woman in it all? The average of both is sunk in the family. And some complete unions of man and woman grow out of life, quarrels, interests, sorrows, joys lived through

side by side even without an initial flame of early passion at all.

Sometimes the woman alone keeps the home together; there are unknown, not meek, but strong heroines among Frenchwomen. The man a Circe's slave; the wife knowing and forgiving; actually giving piece by piece away the dowry she brought, that is poured into the Circe's lap; doing it out of no humble sacrifice, but only for the high thought-out purpose of keeping whole the hearth; at the last a mother to the old crushed husband, with a virile head and heart for two.

Finally, mother beyond anything, beyond even a woman's pride. And the children, for whom it all is done, without whom the hearth is a word? Some of my readers may be incredulous, but French people actually do have children. The well-to-do bourgeoisie, which is the substance of French society, runs to three children per couple, the minimum number required by social science for carrying on the nation, and I know many families of four, five, or six children. The low birth-rate, which has shown for some time only a bare margin of excess over deaths,<sup>1</sup> is due to the barrenness, not of the solid bourgeoisie, but of the fringe, the irregulars, the floating population, and also of the solid peasantry, except that of Brittany, Picardy, and a small portion of Normandy. The solid bourgeoisie, in fact, does not see the fun of making up by extra prolificity for the barrenness of other classes.

<sup>1</sup> The annual birth-rate, contrary to some loose statements made, only twice fell below the death-rate before the war; the

The French child for which the hearth is kept and for which the Frenchwoman sinks herself into the mother, for which the good average

French population was diminished only in two years, 1907 and 1911. The official figures from 1907 were :

1907	Excess of Deaths over Births	19,071
1908	„ „ Births „ Deaths	48,043
1909	„ „ „ „ „	14,608
1910	„ „ „ „ „	71,418
1911	„ „ Deaths „ Births	34,869
1912	„ „ Births „ Deaths	57,911
1913	„ „ „ „ „	41,901

The average annual excess of births over deaths during the period of six years from 1908 were 31,422. "The national increase of the French population remains therefore almost negligible," says the official report of the "Ministry of Labour and Social Foresight." The French population on March 5th, 1911, was 39,602,258. The excess of births over deaths in 1903 was 10 per 10,000. Some points of comparison with other European nations are :

1912, excess of births over deaths :

France	.	.	.	.	.	57,911
German Empire	.	.	.	.	.	839,887
Great Britain	.	.	.	.	.	385,800

Statistics for 1913 show an excess of births over deaths in 49 Departments, and the reverse in 38 Departments. The numbers of the French population are, it must be noted, maintained almost solely by North-eastern France (Nord and Pas de Calais, 30,000 excess of births over deaths, 55 and 100 per 10,000 respectively) and Brittany (Morbihan and Finistère nearly 11,000 excess of births over deaths, 82 and 105 per 10,000 respectively). The valley of the Garonne, the Dauphiné, the country at the sources of the Seine and Normandy (except Seine Inférieure, capital Rouen), show the greatest excess of deaths over births, the highest being 56 per 10,000 in the Department of the Gers. No statistics show which classes are carrying on the race, and which are attempting race suicide. It seems probable that the former are the bourgeoisie and the more prosperous industrial wage earners, the latter the peasantry of Southern and Central France and the Île de France.



French father lives more wholly than most other best fathers—the French child is not the best point of the French family. Something in the French character seems incompatible with childhood. The French child begins by being a real child; the incompatible grown-ups change it. They take it from the wrong end up and turn it upside down. It may be an Englishman's prejudice to fancy that the only grown-ups who really understand children are the English. The French are a very grown-up people (child French is foolish, child English charming) and make violent efforts, when parents, to be child-like. There is, of course, nothing a child hates more, or that is worse for him if he accepts it, than a grown-up being childlike. Every proper parent is more serious talking to the boy of three or five or seven than to any grown-up. At three (or earlier) the child already spots any putting off or fooling. Who would dare risk being caught out by his son of seven? The French fathers and mothers dare. They worship their offspring with a care that often or generally absorbs their lives. They do not understand what respecting a child means. Watch over it, cuddle it, give up every moment and everything to it, in a way English parents would not think of, well and good and cheerfully; remember that it already has its little personality, remember it and stand in awe of it—that they had not thought of. At the worst they make toys of their children; at the best they try to make little gentlemen and ladies of them, for the children's benefit, they imagine,

really for their own satisfaction. The French child does not like it at all, being as natural as any other, but has to get used to it. He grows, cajoled, brooded over, lied to with white lies (are they ever white towards a child?) made loving fun of, adored, worshipped, not respected. One wonders what extraordinary conception of the madness of grown-ups he must acquire. All boys must naturally think grown-ups mad. The French boy, who almost never had a father to be a serious boy with him, must think them more so. Mr. Kenneth Grahame's exquisite books upon children and grown-ups could not have been French, any more than Lewis Carroll's Alices. It is a splendid thing about the French boy that he often remains a real boy in spite of his parents.

The fond French parent does not feel with the child humours, does not understand its dreams, smiles indulgently at fairies, teaches children polished worldly wisdom like La Fontaine's, has almost abolished nursery rhymes, discourages nonsense verse strongly, turns the old original store of folklore into plain human tales as Perrault did, wants the child, in fact, not to be a child and lets the child see the wish. The boy grown to first manhood, the girl grown to first womanhood—and the French parent suddenly understands them quite well, now that the uncomfortable, incomprehensible dream-clouds of childhood have melted into thin clear air.

Every girl, no doubt, is best understood by her mother. The French mother is probably the best at understanding sons. She watches,

like every mother, over her daughters, shields them ever against such flirtation and spooning as in England are considered innocent. Her sons she understands—only too well, it may be, sometimes. Yvette Guilbert, heart and soul social reformer, as well as great artist, I remember telling me with fiery indignation of parents she knew who were anxious and alarmed because their boy of nineteen still had no mistress, telling the anecdote as an example of deplorable French upbringing contrasted with the English, which she admired. The instance was an extreme one. Please do not run away with the idea that all or even many French mothers choose their sons' mistresses for them. But take the cases in which they do; let Anglo-Saxon parents reflect frankly whether that course is worse than making believe that such things as amours of their sons are not. Is Björnstiern Björnson right in *The Glove*,<sup>1</sup> and should the bridegroom go as white to the altar as his bride? Possibly; but does he? If not, the question is whether the parental policy, to which all brought up in English homes can look back, is better, of the elder eyes that refuse to see, the wise voice that never whispers a word of counsel, the home that puts up a blank stone wall against sex.

The youth, launched forth by fond parents, plunges into wild student life. The wild Bohemia of the Latin Quarter! Henri Mürger's

<sup>1</sup> I remember a "White League" being started with great apparent success among my French fellow-students at about the time the play was first performed in France. What became afterwards of the League I never heard.

"Vie de Bohême" set a tale of riotousness dashed with sickly sentimentality going that goes on still—outside Paris. Students who have to pass exams—and there really is quite a large number of them—lead almost monkish lives, and would give points in asceticism to Oxford, and even perhaps Harvard. The others, for whom the University is a place to sow wild oats in, are of course sad dogs; they never would forgive you for thinking otherwise—trust a Frenchman for boasting. In reality most of them lead prematurely domesticated lives, which have at least the merit of frankness, with respectable humdrum mistresses who know beforehand that the life will last four or five years or so. Four or five years of curiously sedate and bourgeois profligacy. Drink, as every one knows, is not the French *forte*, and enters only incidentally into this mildly wild student life. A certain abnormal corruption is very nearly unknown.

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The reprobate youth, given his head by fond parents, is naturally, in the French family and social logic, expected to be a model husband when he settles down, and very frequently is. French men and women are very human, callously human, wisely human; take it either way, as you please. Will they in the French future go on being so human? I suppose that, whatever happens, mankind will go on being human. The power for lasting in French men and women precisely is that they do rest finally upon plain, brutal human facts, without illusions, pretences,



or dreams. In any society of the future there will presumably be as much of man and woman, and as much of father, mother, and child as ever.

Anyhow, if the family breaks up, the French family will be the last to break up. But the great and increasing fringe of French society is what future changes may affect. It is economic changes that threaten to affect human relations in France as elsewhere. The extraordinary growth of luxury, the extraordinary promiscuity of those who enjoy it and those who would appreciate it and have it not, are strong dissolvents of simple human ties. The fringe of irregulars round French society must thus in all probability increase. The primeval relation between man and woman must, while society goes on as it does, be more and more affected by the inequality of wealth. The brave girl who resists temptation may grow scarcer. From the ranks of the earners who own nothing a gradually greater contingent of their women-folk will drift away and join the irregulars.<sup>1</sup> Would any imaginable new social system bring a remedy? The "emancipation" of women would bring none. Among modern women, those who enjoy most independence precisely

<sup>1</sup> This is one reason, among many, why a rise in the French birth-rate is not to be expected. The others include some deeper reasons. The declining birth-rate of old and highly civilised peoples is certainly due finally not to artificial and transient, but to natural and lasting causes. I have already explained that, while the French born population is stationary, the particular French faculty of assimilating foreign settlers must be taken into account as a set-off.

are some of the irregulars. The equal employment of female and male labour would still less be a remedy. A new social State, after some of the many Socialist or Communist methods, involving redistribution of wealth, could not change human nature, but might change economic conditions. That is a matter, not of men and women, but of men, women, and money.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LETTERS

A GENERAL picture of literary France at the beginning of the present century would prove less definite and well composed than those that can be drawn of literary France at many other periods; lines would be more blurred, there would be less massing and more dispersion than the study of the French literary mind has accustomed us to. This is not, I think, an impression due merely to short perspective. It really seems as if some strong tendencies stopped or wandered into byways, as if schools died suddenly or were diverted or went on by mere impetus, as if forms and ideals of literary art which had been vigorous and fruitful lost vitality. Others will carry on the torch, of course, after this pause.

The pause came, as if through a mysterious instinct, just before the great war, which suspended all the art of letters. It was as if the Muse felt she must halt and wait for a storm to pass by. That past, the arts of peace restored, literary problems will exist again. But one will be left still wondering at the strange coincidence, a literary period finishing just when a spasm of deeds and blows was due.

The pause at the beginning of the century

coincided with the wane of Symbolism, which meant a certain humour of the poetic spirit, but it was not only the Symbolists who paused and stopped to think out something new. The observers and the critics of human things, the cool artists without mystery, and the shrewd chroniclers, the novelists, the playwrights, the moralists, these also, and not only the poets, paused.

Poets had paused to look back, and at the death of Jean Moréas in the first years of the century his "Neo-Classicism" was flourishing. They seemed to have had enough of looking for new rhythms and trying to see new shades in the old things. The French "classic" Alexandrine line reappeared and was hammered out again as adamant as ever. It had never been forgotten, but its brassy brilliancy had been under a cloud. Metallic thought followed the metallic line—it was almost certainly not the other way about—and Verlaine's *De la nuance encore et toujours* became obsolete. No *nuances*, no haze, none except neat and nice shading; clear, white, well-defined light. It was an evident regression. Jean Moréas (a Greek, but French by adoption, and in a sense more French than the French) was not alone, but he as it were gave the signal for the pause, and it was obeyed. Poets seemed to be waiting for it. It was a remarkable signal to come after twenty or thirty years of peering behind the veil and looking for fresh and mysterious words by many French poets (while others, of course, went on their clear, neat way), but it might perhaps have been foreseen. The



reaction suddenly reinstated Corneille; French poets stopped, and wondered whether they had not gone adrift for a quarter of a century and whether the worship of the *beau vers* were not after all the true faith. But the pause produced no vital work, and that proved it only a pause. Moréas was only a much less subtle and a less mellifluous Racine. His was a small literary school, and the Neo-Classics were a handful. The Symbolists went on singing softly, just as the Parnassiens had gone on imperturbably when the Symbolists began. But the schools of mystery in poetry had found no new scholars; there were no flourishing schools, or there were a hundred. The only one that prospered then for a time was Neo-Classicism, and it was a school of reminiscence: a few years before, young French poets in half a dozen ardent brotherhoods were discovering the world.

The chronicler, the critic, the satirist of the great human comedy had paused also. The fine maturity of Realism in French novel-writing had only been prolonged and had not developed new life. After Guy de Maupassant came very much lesser Maupassants; after Anatole France came—Anatole France, and he was still the master. The lesser Maupassants are forgotten already; *notre maître* Anatole France is the same exquisite master, but he can have no school. The prose chroniclers of the human comedy were scarcely at all influenced by the mystery-seeking poets of Symbolism. They remained Realists, while the Symbolists sought a deeper reality. They seem to have exhausted suddenly their own Realism

at the beginning of the present century, at the same time that the poets' dreams began to crystallise. Anatole France continued to be Anatole France. M. Romain Rolland painted an immense fresco, his own composition worked out by processes not particularly his own. M. Paul Bourget, M. Abel Hermant, M. René Bazin, M. Marcel Prévost, M. Henry Bordeaux, dozens of others wrote on, and it was still the French observer chronicling French life in the same French way. The life did not seem to have changed, the outlook upon it had not changed, the wit, the *esprit*, the satire, the observation, the few fine moralisings (*à la* Paul Bourget) the neat composition, the short, sharp character-studies, the bits of clear-drawn landscape, the impartiality, the Realism had not changed. It was a curious pause, astonishing if one thinks of the leap from French Romanticism to French Realism, of the sudden outbreak of Flaubert and the Madame Bovary revolution, of the sudden emancipation of the English novel at about the same time, the end of the nineteenth century, of the new fields English novelists roamed over. The freer French stood on the same spot, going over still the same ground in the same way.

The stage also stood still. After Sardou, dramatists were less original than they thought they were. Ibsen, supposed by French critics to have had great influence, had really very little upon the French stage. The mystery drama of M. Maeterlinck ceased and he turned to other themes. The poetic and philosophic drama paused for long intervals, and M. François de

Curel, for instance, a fine thinker little known to the public, was silent for ten or fifteen years. M. Octave Mirbeau, the biting satirist, became silent altogether. M. Alfred Capus continued delightfully human in dozens of plays. M. Paul Hervieu went on making terse tragedies out of neat but simple psychological situations. M. Henri Bataille studied sentimental problems steadily, one every year. M. de Porto Riche studied sentimental problems also, more slowly, one every five or six years. M. Henry Bernstein imagined annually a tremendous stage situation. But it all amounted soon to little more than marking time. The Bernstein play with the best built up catastrophe, the Bataille play with the best wrought sentimental and sensual crisis, all at last turned in a circle. The stage had renewed Sardou's despised technique and renewed observation to suit a different generation of Paris society—and there stopped. French critics turned (many have told me so) from the plays and novels about the "three-cornered household" to English stories for refreshment.

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This pause at the beginning of the twentieth century followed three immediate successive phases of great vitality that filled the nineteenth century : counted backwards, Symbolism, Realism in prose and artifice in verse, Romanticism. It would be impossible even to attempt to guess at what French literature may have in store for the future without knowledge at least

of these three recent great periods—and they but follow naturally centuries preceding that cannot be dealt with here. They correspond with three great groups of tendencies in the French literary, artistic, and philosophic spirit: eloquence of language, perception of the picturesque, generalisation; intense observation of reality, intense respect of form, sense of mystery.

The Symbolists were perhaps the first, since the people's songs and stories of the Middle Ages, to restore the sense of mystery to French literature. The realist prose writers before them and contemporary with them were the most ruthless observers of every-day life known among modern writers; the contemporary versifiers played delightfully with metre and rhyme. The Romantics looked at the world broadly and carelessly; they saw everything and saw nothing accurately.

Romanticism brought comparatively new things to French literature. For two centuries measure and taste had been the literary gods. Exuberant fun in Molière broke out sometimes into fantastic extravagance that harked back to Rabelais, but the foundation was always very sane and reasonable humanity, without a ghost of unearthly fancy. There were traces of attempts to be more than human in Corneille—and one disrespectfully thinks of the frog in the fable blowing itself out—but the language remained always measured and precise, the versified line always neat. What was new in French Romanticism was the attempt to revive the old real fancy of French poetry of the days before



the Renaissance, of the days of Villon, in reaction against the French so-called "Classic" spirit dating from the Renaissance, but to revive poetry in a totally different world and with totally different materials at hand. The attempt in great part failed, probably because it was too deliberate and conscious.

Eloquence, mere eloquence, is natural to Latin races, and the French are in part Latin. But the love of sounding words for the words' sake is perhaps not naturally French. Would Victor Hugo have written what bombast he did write if he had not been consciously and deliberately leading a fight against the dried-up spirit of the eighteenth century from which any breath of poetry had flown? Victor Hugo is sometimes the great, not the greatest, sometimes the worst Romanticism. French Romanticism failed fearfully when it thought that *Hernani*, *Ruy Blas*, *Le Roi s'amuse* were of the same nature as *Hamlet* or *King Lear* or *The Merchant of Venice*—and it actually did think something of the kind. The hopeless blindness of such an illusion is like a gap in the French intelligence. French Romanticism rose high with the splendid picturesqueness of some of the *Légende des Siècles*, the story of Ruth and Boaz, the *Mariage de Roland*, both superbly Hugoesque in their incomparable gleam and charm of purely external poetry. French Romanticism rose highest with the splendid sombreness, finer and deeper than Byron's (was it really any more sincere?), of Alfred de Vigny.

Yet, on the whole, French Romanticism failed.

It brought much brilliant picturesqueness, not much real poetry, and none of the highest, none equal to the highest of English Romanticism, to Shelley or Keats. Victor Hugo might be called a sublime journalist, and was actually the prince of reporters in *Choses vues*. Alfred de Musset has been called the poet of love; he is the delightful and poignant singer of amours. He had only a poor little pair of wings, even in such a line as “Rien ne nous rend si grand qu’une grande douleur,” compared with Shelley’s, who yet sometimes found his feet of clay. Some of the greatest prose came from French Romanticism — Chateaubriand’s — not the greatest poetry. French Romanticism was in part learnt from English poets, and failed because it was learning a lesson. It took the natural French bent for eloquence and tried to make poetry out of it.

French Realism succeeded Romanticism and preceded Symbolism. There were, of course, already Realists contemporary with the Romantics. But through Balzac, for instance, always flows a stream, either rivulet or torrent, of romance that sometimes runs with the rush of poetry, and, by the side of his realism, Balzac’s romance counts as one of the successes of Romanticism. A tragic spirit is breathed into the Père Goriot more moving than mere observation, which is there also; “*La Recherche de l’Absolu*” is a great poem. French Realism was reaction against Romanticism, not at all along any road to poetry. Flaubert, whom one may call the leader, put hardly an atom of poetry into his writings, though he seems to have had a good deal

of it dimly in him. "Madame Bovary," "Bouvard et Pécuchet," "L'Education sentimentale" are wonderful Realism, but are not poetry; even "Salamambo" and the "Tentation de Saint Antoine," in which a poet might have rioted to his heart's content, are wonderful art of words, but are not poetry. This French Realism was peculiarly French. Symbolism, that came after and that restored the sense of mystery to French poetry, may be called comparatively foreign to the French literary spirit, certainly foreign to it as it had been formed since the French Renaissance. Realism came naturally not only to the French literary spirit, but to the French character in general. In this dry, keen, abominably keen, hard outlook upon life, with its wit and cruel sarcasm, without indulgence, without a shadow of sentimentality, and with hardly an ounce of pity, one may trace, refined and exalted, the little French bourgeois' own view of his own little life. A supreme artist like Maupassant, the ruthless Realist, makes great art out of that little view. Zola, having learnt at the Realist School (he renamed it "Naturalist") reverted of course to Romanticism, and when he piled Pelion on Ossa of gross detail his impulse was towards not Realism at all, but a rough and loose picturesqueness, with a vaguely moralising and even puritanical purpose behind it. Even his Realism was never got at first hand. His own life was the simplest in the world<sup>1</sup> and I may tell

<sup>1</sup> With one complication which had its naïve and noble side. He longed to have children. Madame Zola bore none. He took a mistress, a sempstress, who bore him two. He told his wife,

this unknown anecdote. Zola, beginning to write "Nana," the story of a French prostitute, knew nothing of the world of Nana. It was an elderly friend of mine, who is now dead, and who was an old friend of Zola, that introduced Zola to Nana. Zola was as innocent as the day of Nana's world, and of the many other lower worlds he wrote about. Any one who shrinks from Realism must fear Maupassant infinitely more than Zola.

By the side of the prose Realists was a generation of fanciful versifiers. They also made a reaction against Romanticism, but merely against its slipshod form, not towards more real poetry. From Théodore de Banville to José Maria de Hérédia,<sup>1</sup> the generation, which included the "Parnassiens" but began earlier than they, amused itself with nice verse-making, while the prose writers were trying to photograph things without any touching up. The cult of form is also a French trait, and it was brought high. English literature, for one, has seldom aimed at such perfection of workmanship, and there are a hundred French sonnets of the period, by Hérédia and a dozen others, to set for mere handicraft against perhaps a score in all English literature. Against workmanship is set the poetic spirit, which that French generation had

and she approved him. At his death his widow took legal steps to give his illegitimate children the surname of Émile-Zola.

<sup>1</sup> Joséphin Soulayr, Félix Arvers—some of François Coppée, Catulle Mendès, Émile Bergerat, Edmond Rostand, may also be read by those who wish to study a representative period of French verse-making, perfect verse-making, and little poetry.



not and which cannot be learnt. All the same, it does even real poets no harm to study form.

What is called, for convenience' sake, Symbolism, came and brought a new, or a very old thing. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was one of the most important periods in the history of French literature. It is not too much to say that French poetry then rediscovered itself and found a new birth. The Romantics in poetry had finally failed, the Parnassiens had succeeded supremely in verse-making, not in poetry. The Symbolists are called by a misleading name for want of a better one. The greatest among them merely were—poets. Their “movement” began before the word “Symbolism” was heard of; Baudelaire, contemporary with the prose Realists and the delightful verse-makers, would have called himself a Symbolist if he had happened to think of the word. All that their Symbolism consisted of was restoring the sense of mystery to French verse. That was all it was, but it changed French literature. It recreated French poetry. Absurd things have been written about Symbolism, chiefly due to the actual absurd name, and more absurd things have been written around more absurd names still, like Decadentism. The so-called Symbolists (they often called themselves so, I admit) merely thought that real poetry must reach to something beyond things, symbols of things if you will, to the “ends of being and eternal grace” if you could. They for the first time for centuries widened the horizon of French verse, they discovered—rediscovered—(to quote

for the millionth time words that can never be hackneyed) those

. . . . magic casements opening on foam  
Of perilous seas in faëry lands forlorn,

which the Romantics so seldom saw.

Symbolism was a breaking up of rigid and precise forms and thoughts long crystallised in French literature. The *vers libre* was an obvious rupture of old forms. But there was a deeper meaning in the *vers libre* than a mere breaking away from old fixed laws of versification. There was a parallel dissolving and freeing, a rubbing out of neat outlines and precise categories in form and in thought. Verlaine's famous "Art poétique,"<sup>1</sup> albeit still regular in form, is the more astonishing because it so perfectly conveys what was then the new or renewed French weariness

<sup>1</sup> De la musique avant toute chose,  
Et pour cela préfère l'impair  
Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,  
Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.

Il faut aussi que tu n'aïlles point  
Choisir tes mots sans quelque méprise :  
Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise  
Où l'indécis au précis se joint.

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,  
Pas la Couleur, rien que la Nuance :

De la musique encore et toujours,  
Que ton vers soit la chose envolée  
Qu'on sent qui fuit d'une âme en allée  
Vers d'autres cieux à d'autres amours.

Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure  
Eparse au vent crispé du matin  
Qui va fleurant la menthe et le thym,  
Et tout le reste est littérature.

ness of the old, hard, blunt, jejune fixity and precision, and a desire for richer realms of dreams and subtle half-lights and fluid fancies, “la chanson grise,” “la Nuance,” the “winged thing,” that flies off to other worlds than this—and all else is mere literature. Other ages of French poetry had not called for wings to fly to other worlds than this. It would, of course, be a grotesque mistake to set down Verlaine as a decadent and to class him otherwise than as one of the greatest French poets. He was the more extraordinary because he scarcely began the break-up of the rigid French verse, yet already expressed the flux of French poetic thought. The change was a parallel one. There is no mere superficial difference, for instance, between the adamant technique of Hérédia and the fluid, vague verse of Henri de Régnier in his younger days as a Symbolist poet. The difference also is between Régnier trying to seize the fleeting shadow of a dream and Hérédia making poetry only out of precise ideas. The latter is a very different enterprise, never the highest. The strict Alexandrine verse—including also the so-called free versification of La Fontaine, really just as rigid—corresponds with a strictly human choice of poetic matter, and a choice among strictly human subjects confined to those thoughts that can be, in Cartesian language, clearly and precisely defined.

Not one attempt was made after the Renaissance to change the laws of French versification until the Symbolists tried the *vers libre*. These laws may be summed up thus: every line

measured by its number of syllables; each syllable to count alike, including mute e's save when elided (elision always occurring between terminal mute e and initial vowel) or at the end of a line; no hiatus of terminal vowel followed by initial vowel allowed; rhyming compulsory, and alternating (in couplets or not) of "feminine" (ending in mute e) with "masculine" rhymes (ending by any other letter) also compulsory. For the Alexandrine line the particular rules are: each line to consist of two halves of six syllables each, the cæsura occurring compulsorily between the two hemistichs and never after a mute e unless elided, lines rhyming compulsorily in successive couples and feminine and masculine couples of rhymes alternating. The French Alexandrine line is rigid, yet not as hopelessly rigid as it might seem. The fiction by which a mute e is counted as a full syllable allows elasticity. In French speech the mute e, when pronounced at all, is equal in quantity to about a quarter of any other syllable. The two lines "Puisque l'aube grandit, puisque voici l'aurore, Puisque après m'avoir fui longtemps l'espoir veut bien" . . . (Verlaine) are counted as being of exactly the same measure, though the former line, having three mute e's, must be spoken in much less time than the second, which has none (the e of "Puisque après" is of course elided).<sup>1</sup> Another element,

<sup>1</sup> "Qu'est-ce donc ? Qu'avez-vous ?—Laissez moi, je vous prie.  
Mais encor dites moi quelle bizarrerie. . . ."

the two opening lines of Molière's *Misanthrope*, each are counted as being of twelve full syllables.



unmentioned in any French prosody, is the tonic stress, generally on the final syllable when not a mute *e*. The commonplace Alexandrine line has four stresses resembling an anapæst line of four feet in English prosody. But the stress can be varied greatly, and more than in English prosody, which is based on stress, whereas the French is not; some French Alexandrine lines even may count only two stresses. I must add that the whole question of any stress in French verse at all is under controversy. But it seems certain that the masters of the Alexandrine line, like Racine, consciously employed the stress as well as the mute *e* to vary rhythm.

The *vers libre*, invented by the Symbolists, is a total revolution against century-old French prosody. The first innovation dared before them was the two cæsurae in the Alexandrine line dividing it into three portions of four syllables, instead of two of six. Then came no cæsura at all. But the *vers libre* breaks utterly away. Hiatus is accepted, assonance replaces rhyme, lines follow one another of irregular length, one of two syllables may precede one of fourteen, whereas in traditional French prosody twelve syllables is the limit any line may reach. The effect to the ear is that of (more or less) rhythmical prose. A complete distinction must be drawn between the *vers libre* and the so-called irregular verse of La Fontaine or that of Molière in *Amphitryon*. The "irregularity" of the latter verse consists solely of the assembling of lines varying in length up to that of the Alexandrine. Syllables continue to be counted in the

orthodox way, rhyme is compulsory and hiatus forbidden. The flaw of the *vers libre* is that it has never been, and doubtless cannot be, even broadly codified. One poet—like Verhaeren—sings defying all rules of French prosody, and—sings. Another writes *vers libres*—and prosés. The absence, or rather the uncertainty, of the tonic accent or stress in the French language is the obstacle to a rhythm based on anything else but the scansion of syllables. The old rules of French prosody being done away with, the French poet must make his own music, and some did, but some did not. The best comparison is with Walt Whitman, who ignored English prosody, and who, when he wrote verse, sometimes made beautiful music and sometimes atrocious prose. The *vers libre* thus has its advantages, like Walt Whitman's verse. The man who has a sense of the music of words succeeds, and the other does not. But no proper prosody of the *vers libre* can or will be written. I repeat that the probably insuperable obstacle is the uncertainty of the stress in the French language, which prevents rules of rhythm unless syllables be counted.

The *vers libre*, the great upheaval of French prosody, thus seems to have amounted to little in technique. No new prosody was set up, no new workable theory of music in words set forth. But those precisely who did, breaking the old laws, make music of words without any laws save of their own fancy, counted the more. The prosody of the *vers libre* is, and always will be, in flux; it imaged well the thought of the Symbolists who aimed at describing the indefinite

and the unfinished. At the same time it must be remembered that one of the greatest painters of *la nuance*, Verlaine, never wrote entirely "free" verse, and never broke with all, or even most, of the rules of the old French prosody.

What Symbolist thought tried to do was to be less human than all French poetry had been before it, and to be more than human, to catch what lies dim and vague at the back of the human mind and may be divine, to seize what clouds of glory it trails, to say not what the mind conceives completely but what it guesses at, to show the light that never was on sea or land. The human poetry—and other French poets have been the greatest human poets—expresses only what the mind conceives completely. The Symbolists tried to express only what the mind does not conceive completely, only the fluid, the unending, the unfinished, intuitions and infinite longings. Bergson's philosophy of intuition issued in part from the poetry of Symbolism. Molière and La Fontaine, among an innumerable host in French literature, a few of which were their peers, were perhaps the greatest purely human poets any literature has ever known. Purely worldly knowledge has never been told as easily and as completely as in the miraculous Alexandrine verse of *Le Misanthrope* or *Les Femmes Savantes*—the natural talk of men and women falling by itself, as it were, into metre—or the varied lines of La Fontaine's fables, worldly wisdom in cool, clear verse, meant for worldly men and women, and not at all for the French children of six or

seven who are set to con it. In both writers, and in many others, French literature achieved supremely what other literatures have done less well; even Horace comes near but not up to it. Pope stops a long way behind. This kind of French masterpiece, perhaps the essential masterpiece of French verse, is exactly what the Symbolists did not want to copy or continue; in it there is no mystery. Were Molière or La Fontaine (or was Horace indeed) aware of mystery? The Symbolists thus, almost alone in French literature for several centuries, came into the sphere of the real English poets—shall we say the real poets? François Villon was human enough, but no simply human poet could have thought of that refrain which still haunts the world (the very small world that reads poetry or cares a jot about it), “*Mais où sont les neiges d’antan ?*” Symbolism (I still, of course, mean all the poets from Baudelaire downwards who may be loosely grouped under the name) thus stretched hands across three centuries to a French poetry which the Renaissance and French Classicism strangled, doing greater things afterwards themselves; but, while greater in execution, not as high in intention. It is impossible here to do more than give a list of names, and an incomplete list: Baudelaire, truculent, sharp, yet mysterious; Verlaine, poet in a hundred moods, the poet of exquisite allusion<sup>1</sup>; Mallarmé, who told in precise words the vaguest dreams, sometimes still undeciphered

<sup>1</sup> The poet, for instance, of that “*Impression fausse*” which is so delicately true.



riddles<sup>1</sup>; Arthur Rimbaud, all fantastic, unearthly suggestion; Jules Laforgue, sardonic but mysterious; F. Viélé-Griffin and Stuart Merrill, the Gallicised Americans, minor singers with a dreamy charm; Gustave Kahn, who wrote the best treatise on the *vers libre*; Charles Van Lerberghe, an extraordinary dreamer; Maurice Maeterlinck, a prose poet of mystery in his earlier plays; Francis Jammes, the poet of the old French soil and the most truly Christian poet of his day; Paul Fort, who invented a new form of ballad, prose and verse merging into one another subtly, and who is at once homely and mystic; Émile Verhaeren, probably the greatest, a very human poet, but whose high, brooding human epics never forget the mystery of human things, and, while painting in broad frescoes the world that passes, reach restlessly beyond it.

The so-called Symbolists did not fulfil all the promise they gave: the output was large and the above list of names might be three or four times as long; the outstanding names in French literature were fewer than some other periods have bequeathed. Perhaps poetry that has mystery in it is not natural to the French literary spirit. But Symbolism was all the greater event in French literature; it was a great event

<sup>1</sup> Read, for instance, "Hérodiade," a perfect piece of profound poetic suggestion, or the poem dedicated to his daughter fanning herself:

"O rêveuse, pour que je plonge  
Au pur délice sans chemin  
Sache par un subtil mensonge  
Garder mon aile dans ta main."

also in European literature. One must remember that it ruled European literature for some years. For the first time since before the Renaissance French literature had shown other literatures the poetic way; it had often, almost constantly, shown the way of literary taste, balance, human sense, and artistic judgment; it had never pointed the road to the stars as English poetry did in Shelley's day. French Symbolism of the end of the nineteenth century is comparable, though less in achievement, with the English "Romantic movement" of the beginning of the nineteenth century.

What will follow the pause which occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century? One may speak negatively with some assurance, affirmatively only with reservations. Symbolism seems to have died, and with it the mystic sense. There is no sign of a Romantic revival. The old perfect Realism continues only in imitators. There are survivals, of course, from many schools; Edmond Rostand from that of sometimes delightful, sometimes boring, acrobatics in verse, dating back to the middle-century versifiers, the great old Émile Verhaeren, last of mystic French poets, many Realists, some Neo-Classics repeating Jean Moréas. But really the literary schools that flourished with extraordinary vigour at the end of the nineteenth century died with the century. The young men, whom it behoves to start schools, are groping their way. They start a dozen different schools that are shut up in a day. The conflicting impulses of the times prey upon them. There is no such sweeping

“movement” as that which carried off French poetry in search of mystery, on a passionate if not always profitable quest.

No one “literary movement” can be predicted now for French literature. In a confusion of purposes, where the old Realism jostles neat verse-making and mysticism persists still by the side of dry Neo-Classicism, but all apparently moribund, the critic can tentatively discern two perhaps clearest tendencies. The one comes from the revival of orthodox and traditional Roman Catholicism, the return to formal faith and to religious and political obedience; the other comes from a raw and still vague religion of democracy that may produce greater things. The revival of orthodox Roman Catholicism, dealt with elsewhere, and corresponding with political revivals in the new generation, has so far produced no literature worth mentioning; it abides by those Symbolists who were devout Christians, like Francis Jammes,<sup>1</sup> and who believed and sang before any political Church revival.

The tentative new poetry of democracy is very tentative still; it has done nothing of note yet, but it may lead somewhere. The one new French literary idea in the beginning of the twentieth century was an attempt to reflect in poetry what some think to be a new social aspect. They who think so have discovered men in the mass and washed their hands of individual man.’ This may or may not be a new social aspect. It is legitimate poetic matter, if you can

<sup>1</sup> Paul Claudel, chiefly a playwright, is also a leading Neo-Catholic.

make the poetry out of it. Walt Whitman sang democracy, and after him Émile Verhaeren sang cities and crowds and men bent over the soil. But both sang and looked from the one man's point of view. It may be possible to write a new epic of democracy from the crowd's point of view, to be not the singer watching the crowd but the crowd itself singing, to make poetry out of ordinary men's doings, not from without but from within them, to be a renewed Greek Chorus. That is the new attempt young French literature made at the beginning of the twentieth century. The purpose can be imagined : to abolish not only the poet's personality but the hero's personality, to be as impersonal as the things that look on at human doings, to make poetry out of that very attitude, impersonal and universal, the contrary of the lyric reading that makes poetry out of what the poet feels ; to be more universal also than epic or dramatic poets who have their heroes for their spokesmen, or narrate but always from some watcher's point of view ; to sink all personality, not only of the poet, but of any creatures of the poet. Those who hold that Democracy is a new force in which men individually will not count, and in which there will no longer be any representative men, will jump at such a poetic theory. The practice is another thing. Can the poet be absolutely impersonal ? But more is asked of him. Can he be impersonal otherwise than by creating other persons and identifying himself with them, as Shakespeare did ? Will there be a poetry in the future of crowds, not of men, a poetry so



general that it will sing only of what millions of men assembled feel, a poetry of the men (not even man) in the street?

This is the only new thing towards which French literature seemed to tend at the beginning of the twentieth century. Jules Romains and George Duhamel, among others, showed the way, with plays, novels, and poems,<sup>1</sup> but were far then from the goal. The immediate future of French literature belongs either to the Roman Catholic Revival or to this new poetry of Democracy, or to both.

<sup>1</sup> The plays, endeavouring to express a collective voice, that of an army for instance, remain raw, and the simple Greek tragic Chorus is more expressive in the same way. The poems show more promise, and strike the impersonal note well, but without much music—a bad sign. The novels include *Mort de Quelqu'un*, the tale of all that happens round the “death of Somebody,” whom nobody knows, faithfully carried out for Impersonalism, but, it must be confessed, tiresome.

## CHAPTER XIX

### LES JEUNES

THERE is not a new France. The war did not remake France. Young France is not regenerate. There is no miracle in the France of to-day, not even a Joan of Arc. To listen to some (and in France too) one would think France had just been saved from the abyss, the French spirit rescued from perdition, and French youth transfigured. Those who know France know that there is no new France, but the same old France. It is preaching to converts now to say that one knew France would not be found wanting, but the converts are very new ones. They told us the other day copiously (it was the other day, before the war, but it seems an age ago) how the country had gone to the dogs, the old spirit was spent, the nation rotten, age cynical and youth effete. Then, in the hour of stress, they discover "the new France."

There is no new France. Any one who had seen France with half an eye, half a seeing eye at all events, knew that when the great crux came Anti-militarists and jingoes would stand together and priests with Anarchists, that every Frenchman would fight to a finish for his home-

stead, and the French mind die rather than be downed. "Les Jeunes" of to-day have died in hundreds of thousands for their country, and hundreds of thousands more will die before victory, which none dying doubted, and none living doubts, is won. This is not a jot more than was expected of them or they had bargained to give. It is the old, old France.

The Jeunes of to-day are in the trenches. The Jeunes of the 1915 contingent are, those who survive, old soldiers now. The Jeunes of the 1916 contingent, boys of nineteen, went to the front in the spring of 1916—and how many live now? The noblest of wars makes a hideous gap in a nation's young thought. But the gap will be bridged. After the war young thinking France will carry on the torch, as it was handed on before. There is no break in the generations of Jeunes that follow one another. I shall try to make clear that those who in their day were successively called the Jeunes inherited and bequeathed, and I will determinedly prophesy that the heritage will be taken up with profit. There is no new France, and the old France will go on.

The name of Les Jeunes is really not used now, and was indeed already old-fashioned before the war. The last Jeunes, properly so-called in French parlance, belong to the "classes" of 1890 or thereabouts, the military contingents that were twenty years of age in the early nineties, and are among the veterans who were called up and who guard railways or dig trenches or here and there still are in the firing line. The

first Jeunes are either fifty and past military age, or are dead like Stuart Merrill and Remy de Gourmont and many another who died shyly and noiselessly as it behoves a civilian to die in war-time.

But the name of Les Jeunes is a handy one still for use in a quick sketch of modern thinking France. There will always be French Jeunes, for one thing, however the name fall into abeyance, and the French themselves should not let the name drop for the sake of their ever-young intellectual inquisitiveness and initiative. I use here the name conveniently for the thinkers of France to-day whose work has not yet passed into history, and also for those who are beginning to think for France and will have to make the France of to-morrow.

The Jeunes, then, are they who after one war carried on thinking France—to another; who when 1870–71, in a dozen years or so, was healing up, carried on the ever-young thought of France, who upheld and enriched it until the ghastly cataclysm of 1914, and who to-morrow will keep the flame alight still. Not theirs the fault that the period must be dated by wars. Their fault, indeed, was to think trustfully while the foe was plotting war. The savage awakening may make a difference in the Jeunes' thought of to-morrow.

The period was one of various, contradictory, entertaining, and illuminating thought, though through all its twists and bounds it was the same French thought. Maurice Barrès, the artist-anarchist of the eighties and President of the



League of Patriots to-day, is the same Maurice Barrès. Remy de Gourmont in praise of Voltaire and Charles Péguy (killed in action) singing his strange, reiterative, naïve, and skilful chaunts of Joan of Arc, are both equally French. It was a period that ran gaily and quickly through all the moods of French thought, from Voltaire to Amiel, from Boileau to Verlaine (whose solemn joke was that Boileau was his favourite poet). Every successive decade (or even lustrum) of Jeunes spurned the previous one, made a fresh philosophy, and read the world anew.

Symbolism, Art for Art's Sake, and Anarchism : that is roughly the first phase of the Jeunes, down to the nineties. The Mysticism of Life, Life for Life's Sake, the return to Nature, was the second, about to the end of the century. The third included a revival of religious orthodoxy, Neo-Classicism, constructive social policies. There were, of course, also many subdivisions in time and in doctrine. You can imagine how each successive faith fought its predecessor. But it was all very French.

The first Jeunes were not the mere fantasies they have been painted, and had much more honesty and reason in them than has often been assumed. I try to explain in another chapter what Symbolism actually was : a venture to find afresh the springs of real poetry, through the sense of mystery, and a revolt against the eloquence of French Romanticism. Art for Art's Sake, which certainly won a bad name, was not mere café pose or drawing-room foppery. There were, of course, fools for Art's sake. It was easy

for the artist to fool once he had the manner. It was also very easy to make fun of him in ignorance, not easy at all to know him. I remember, years ago, a satire by an English journalist of the poet for poetry's sake of that time which was keen and comic, until one gradually understood that the man satirised was—Verlaine. There were funny and true traits in the journalistic sketch—but the man was Verlaine. An impossible and even monstrous person, of course, and indeed ridiculous—but still, Verlaine. No one is entitled to say that to men who gave what Verlaine gave much may be forgiven. There is nothing that has to be forgiven them in the long run. That alone justifies Art for Art's Sake. With many follies those Jeunes tried for beauty. They and their masters often fooled themselves. Stéphane Mallarmé all his life tried to put into ten words the mystery of a fleeting minute; and he kept in a cupboard in his little flat a wonderful MS. which was to be the work of his life and which, when he died, was found to be blank paper. But Mallarmé reached beauty sometimes, and that was all that mattered or that he cared twopence about, and he knew it. What else, indeed, when you come to think of it, should have mattered for him? The man who builds an engine is asked only to build a good engine. The artist who has made a little beauty has also done his job. Art for Art's Sake, shorn of cant and flummery (and these Jeunes themselves were not cant-guiltless) is really a sound phrase. Art for Art's Sake. The phrase has become ridiculous. But read it

freshly ; for the sake of what can art be save for its own ?

That time had the utmost horror of a social or any purpose in art. Certainly a bad poem cannot have a good purpose. But that time aimed at no purpose either in its art or outside it. Those Jeunes were frankly Anarchists. They refused to be woven into the social fabric, they refused that essential satisfaction of all other French men and women—a “social position.” They did not invent Bohemianism, of course, but they were no Bohemians *à la* Henry Murger who were just plain honest citizens fooling amusingly while young. Of course, also, they did have a place in society and perforce drew livelihoods from incomes or work. But they quite honestly apologised for having to live, and were honestly angry with a world out of joint. Angry, indeed bitter, and sometimes morose, real Jeunes though they remained ; that sombre strain inside them made them different from the Bohemians of the old Latin Quarter before 1870.

They were Anarchists in revolt against a social world that had failed, which did not honestly strive for better things, in which the man professing to help the world on was no better than the man who only enjoyed it, and Socialist and Reactionary were alike on the make. They were Anarchists, not at all Socialists. They agreed with Baudelaire, who violently refused alms to a beggar : “Had you hit me in the face I would have given you all I have.” They did not believe in society, and they did not believe

either in those who said they meant to change society. It is one of the deepest traits of that artistic generation that it held aloof absolutely from all political France and from all the political growth the Third Republic was going through. Those Jeunes savagely ignored political and social essentials.

It was, in a strain, a bitter generation. One understands why now. They, themselves, never understood. They had no idea that what rankled in them, the men who had been boys in 1870, was the iron of defeat that had entered into the French soul, until that very iron should make the French soul stronger. They were too near the cause to see it, and vehemently ignored it. They said and wrote, and apparently thought, nothing about what France had gone through and what she was retrieving. They professed to no patriotism, they ridiculed the League of Patriots, they suffered when poor, great-hearted Paul Déroulède foolishly led anti-Lohengrin riots, they violently scouted "La Revanche," and Remy de Gourmont said (what was always afterwards unjustly brought up against him and he well made amends for before he died) that he would not give his little finger for Alsace-Lorraine.

Now one sees, what they did not, that their bitterness was France taking her tonic and recovering. They were not, of course, always as bitter as all that. They often got some fun out of their Anarchism. They naturally got an immense amount of fun out of their art. Their Anarchic aloofness also gave them satisfaction.



The Anarchists who threw bombs, Henry, Ravachol, Vaillant, were discussed by those Jeunes with cool and careful impartiality, and on the whole little was found to be said against them. "Does vague humankind matter, if there be beauty in the gesture?" said Laurent Tailhade (much older than the then Jeunes) of an Anarchist outrage, and soon after himself had an eye damaged by another Anarchist bomb. At the fag end of the period I remember being with other Jeunes, then very jeune, among the gods at a Sunday concert. The *Tristan* prelude was being played. Behind us was a cloaked and hooded man who kept his hands under his cloak. Undoubtedly an Anarchist with a bomb ready to throw. We whispered to one another, "We will hear the *Tristan* out," and were perhaps, or pretended to be, disappointed because we were not blown up listening to *Tristan*, the cloaked man having had no idea of bombs.

The "Classe 1890" (recruits twenty years of age that year), or thereabouts, were the last Anarchists of the Jeunes. The "Classes 1890-5" rediscovered Man and Society. They had no idea that, as they know now, they were the sign of a vital moment in France to-day, and that while they had grown up she had been healed and remade. They made their great discoveries quite freshly. They discovered Life as well as Man and Society. It does not sound an original thing to do at twenty, but they thought it was, and it was indeed for them. They found out that life was worth living and told everybody so, told France so, told it to the Jeunes of before,

who had sometimes wondered even whether art, which they knew exquisitely, was worth while. In a year or two the Latin Quarter, and soon after half a dozen chief provincial towns, were ablaze with young magazines published to praise Life. Not long before Mallarmé had said, "Le littérature seule existe," and contemporary "Jeunes revues" had said the same. Now the only thing was to live, and though one wrote about it one must write, not nicely with subtle words, but in dashing gusts, as it were in the short intervals of real living. Decadentism, a pose of the previous Jeunes, was solemnly denounced, and it is amusing to record that precisely when Paris journalism, and the journalism of the world after it, was playing at being Fin de Siècle and thus up-to-date, young thinking France was beginning a new world, or thought it was, and to think one's world new proves it so.

A new world in which everything human mattered. I shall always remember the gusto with which we discovered the Divine Average. This did not apply only to 'bus-conductors and navvies. Even stockbrokers and pork-butchers became interesting. Floating companies and selling sausages were human activity after all. The grocer, actually the grocer, *l'épicier*, before the accepted particular personification of the Philistine (why particularly the grocer no one ever knew) was a man, and how much he made out of a pound of sugar was interesting.

An absurd new world; yet new. A world in which the Jeune actually became reconciled

to Man and to men and to men's work around him, renounced aloofness and dilettanteism, shattered the Ivory Tower and suddenly put the Common Man on a pedestal, grateful to be of one flesh with him. This new Jeune learnt to know the Divine Average considerably from Walt Whitman, then just translated into French, and at the same time Émile Verhaeren taught him the poetry of man's grimmest labour, of forges and mines and blast-furnaces and railways. The mysticism of the Ivory Tower and the cult of the Ego was turned into the mysticism of mankind and Man's works. It was as absolute positively as Anarchism had been negatively; everything human was right, and since a thing was in nature it was good. I am afraid these Jeunes, though social enthusiastically, were not much more constructive than their predecessors who had been anti-social. They returned to Nature, they praised Man and Man's works, they worshipped Life, they reinstated our common manhood into its proper divine place with beautiful ingenuousness, and they had a great many schemes for regenerating the world on these lines. But political constructiveness was not their forte. They had no more truck than their predecessors with any political parties of progress, reform, or upheaval, none of which to their liking had a sufficiently mystic social sense. In fact, they dreamt and did little. But it must be said they scarcely had time—better, have not yet had time. What they brought, those Jeunes, if it was only great, young dreaming, was not without its meaning for France, and has not

spent all its meaning yet. The last has not been heard by any means of those Jeunes of the beginning of the century who rediscovered Life.

The third generation of Jeunes rose in strange contrast to its predecessors. The first towards life was sullen and loved art. The second chortlingly embraced life and art. The third came up cautiously and peered round. It looked everything over with a circumspection almost uncanny in youth, certainly unknown to the Jeunes of before. The bitter Anarchist Jeunes rushed into their Anarchism. The human Jeunes plunged into the praise of life. The third Jeunes at the outset were wonderfully cool and wise; that was the first characteristic of the generation just before the war. No one blames them for it, but they did take aback those who had been the Jeunes before them. A few months before the war France was ringing with "Inquiries into the Youth of France," the boulevards were feeling Youth's pulse, Youth was allowing itself seriously to be diagnosed and probed and interviewed,<sup>1</sup> and intellectual Youth, contemplative Youth, business Youth, bank-clerk, shop-walking, ploughboy Youth gave its opinions, and got them published, about "the new France." No boulevards had ever bothered about the earlier Jeunes, they just had to go their own way un-interviewed. The new Jeunes were much more modern.

Art, to begin with, they looked at coolly—that is, the literary art. Of the old enthusiasms for the *vers libre* and for recasting French

<sup>1</sup> *Les Jeunes Gens d'aujourd'hui*, by "Agathon," 1913.



verse nothing was left. The old enthusiasm for putting mysticism into French poetry was scarcely even remembered. Neo-Classicism, though invented long before in the days of the most unclassic Jeunes of the second period, by Moréas among others, their elder and not of them, suited the new cool temper best. The temper refused to let poetry run away with it any more. Verhaeren was no longer read; he belonged to the Jeunes of yester-year, though indeed in years old enough to be the father of the Jeunes who worshipped him. Poetic thought was neat thought to be put into neat verse. Poetry, in fact, was no longer what mattered most, and did not after all matter much. Life mattered most, but not at all in the way the previous Jeunes who discovered Life meant. Life mattered practically—a statement surprising to the Jeunes of before—and essentially was a medium for getting on. “Then, in the days of the old Jeunes” (wrote a new Jeune), “‘jeune’ meant mad; to-day it means sober, measured, traditionalist, praiseworthy.” This sounds as if it might also mean prig.

In one of the “inquiries” into French youth just before the war this trait is recorded. At a College, the *École Normale*, the highest classical college in France, towards 1900 a man, asked what he meant to be, said “a notary,” and was jeered at by all his fellow collegiates. “Nowadays,” the “Inquiry” says, “one would not laugh at him.” The man did become a notary, it seems, and makes money. Why should not a man at college say he means to be a notary?

It was not etiquette among the old Jeunes to talk of taking up a profession which had money in it. Why would the man have been applauded towards 1910? The notary's had become a reinstated profession in young French opinion, a profession, of course, that stands not by itself but by vested interests and capital. How changed the new Jeunes from the old! No one quarrelled with them, one liked the parable of the student who was derided then and would have been cheered now for wanting to be a notary; one merely noted the change.

The new Jeunes did want to get on and to get on in business as much as in art, letters or philosophy. That was the only really new France just before the war; a youth that at last frankly wanted to make money and was not ashamed to say so. The war came upon a young France that was trying to be "American," to drop the old European fetish of the "liberal professions," and the old French fetish of the "functionary" profession, and to learn to put the trader, the man of business, the practical engineer on the same rank as the professor or the Government civil servant, to judge all by the same simple standard of success. This was really new in France, which has always had the business spirit, but has almost always ranked it an inferior human activity. The previous Jeunes, who discovered the mystic humanness of Man and that even the grocer was a brother, yet never dreamt of going into the grocery trade. The new Jeunes, not through any mystic bent at all, were quite ready to take up grocery with-

out any false shame if grocery were the way to get on.

The not at all mystical new Jeunes yet were the first generation for many a day in modern France that knew a religious revival. The increased hold of the Roman Catholic Church on young intellectual France just before the war is undoubted. Simultaneously came two other novelties; anti-intellectualism and the Camelots du Roi. The previous Jeunes were mystics in their way and generally against Churches, were mystical but certainly as intellectual as it lay in them to be, were no politicians (albeit most of them, it is true, were Dreyfusards in their day), but certainly not Conservative or reactionary. The new Jeunes, practical and reasonable, in numbers professed perfect Roman Catholic orthodoxy, often indeed proclaiming their faith with some display, and advocating in so many words a "religious realism" that found "safety" in a traditional doctrine. At the same time, they (though not all of them) invented a new crusade—down the intellect, and act first, think afterwards. Finally some of them, mostly the militant Roman Catholics, started the vehement Royalist revival which in a few years formed propaganda centres in many parts of France, particularly the north and the extreme south, and succeeded in bringing off a number of street fights with the police, making a good deal of noise, and generally keeping itself in the public eye. Many, indeed, of the "King's Hawkers" have since died bravely for their country. "At last, one can fight and not be run in," said one

in the trenches who had often fought the Paris police, and with that he led the attack out of the trenches and was killed.

Anti-intellectualism was a curious hybrid by-product of the new cult of getting on and of Bergsonism out-Bergsonised. The old Jeunes were stagnant pools of intellectualism, the new were the rushing streams of pragmatism. "The only speculation worthy of interest is this: what is there to do and how must it be done?" is one conclusion of an inquiry into the new Jeune's frame of mind. M. Maurice Barrès, repentant, wrote in the same inquiry: "I think I perceive that in these past twenty years the denial of Mephistopheles, whom we thought so fine, has greatly lost credit." That is, *Der Geist der stets verneint* is not the man he was. There is something in that. The old Jeunes may have made too much of the everlasting No. The new Jeunes may have tried to find the everlasting Yes. But they did not try to find it by thinking. Many of them professed great aversion from philosophy, metaphysics, speculation of any kind, and any thought other than that which flies to action, with which doubt ceases. They had, wrote one, an idealism, but "an active idealism without any love of high intellectual contemplation and of the fine feasts of the mind." This is where, against his intention (but I am afraid he did not mind the popularity he won) Bergson came in out-Bergsonised. Every one knows his great dissection of a purely intellectual interpretation of things, and his dazzling vindication of intuition through which



alone the "vital spring" acts. But to be intuitive to the extent of doing and not thinking is taking Bergson a little too literally.

Asked what was the most un-French "ism" one could think of one would answer, "Anti-intellectualism." And the new Jeunes were true to France after all. One of the most gifted of them who answered inquiries into their frame of mind was Ernest Psichari, grandson of Ernest Renan, who wrote from the African army where he was a lieutenant. From Africa he went to the front at the war, and died gallantly in action. He, Renan's grandson, became a devout Roman Catholic, and there was tragedy in his faith. Must he (he asks somewhere in his writings) believe that the great and good grandfather he knew is damned for ever? In a horrible vision he describes, he saw his grandfather back in the Brittany village where Renan was born and bred, and the grandson in his faith turned away shuddering from his grandfather who had sinned against the Holy Ghost.

But Ernest Psichari, asked for his opinion upon the new Jeune Anti-intellectualism, wrote: "Whatever we do, we shall always put intelligence above everything else. It may be that a pure heart is preferable. But a Frenchman will always think that a sinner is more agreeable to God than a fool." There spoke the true grandson of Renan, after all, and the true Frenchman. What the Jeunes of after the war, what is left of them, will be, no one can tell. They will have come out of hell. I think they will come back more French than ever, with indeed

a fierce and strong will to keep the French mind and the mind alive, and to drown in the pursuits of intelligence, if possible, the memory of all the horrors a savage aggression brought upon their country. I know now Jeunes in the trenches (I have talked with them there) who in the intervals of throwing hand grenades discuss letters and art and metaphysics. They all agree that philosophy and the arts are the only pastimes in a dug-out that divert the mind from the war ten yards away, and I have read a good essay on music and Wagner in particular which was written in the Woevre a few hundred yards from the Boche lines. France will have to build much up again. The Jeunes of the morrow of victory will revive the ferment of thinking. No real French mind can ever forget Henri Poincaré : "Thought is but a flash of lightning in the midst of a long night. But it is that flash that is everything."



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